



## LIBERTY TO-DAY



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The publishers of this book are in no way responsible for the views expressed therein.

C. E. M. JOAN.



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## CHAPTER I

### THE TWILIGHT OF LIBERTY

#### *Bury and Strachey*

"THE struggle of reason against authority has ended in what appears now to be a decisive and permanent victory for liberty. In the most civilized and progressive countries, freedom of discussion is recognized as a fundamental principle." The quotation is from Professor Bury's *A History of Freedom of Thought*, published in 1913. In this book he tells us how freedom of thought was established once and for all in the nineteenth century, and expresses the view that the struggle for liberty may now be regarded as closed. "Well, that is very nice, very nice indeed—if it is true," comments Lytton Strachey in his review of Bury's book. "But, after all, can we be quite so sure that it is true? Is it really credible that the human race should have got along so far as that? That such deeply rooted instincts as the love of persecution and the hatred of heterodoxies should have been dissipated into thin air by the charms of philosophers and the common sense of that remarkable period the nineteenth century?" Strachey proceeds to suggest that Bury may, perhaps, have allowed his judgment to have been unduly influenced by the cessation of religious persecution. That Western man is more tolerant in matters of religion he concedes; "but it is not the principles of

toleration that make us so—it is mere indifference." We simply do not, he hints, care enough about the great truths of Christianity to make things uncomfortable for those who do not hold them. But in spheres in which men feel keenly the grounds for self-congratulation may not, he suggests, be so strong. Churches are, after all, not the only institutions that have persecuted and oppressed: there are also States; there is also the sphere of politics.

Since Bury's words were written twenty years have elapsed. They have endorsed Strachey's doubts and answered his questions, conclusively and in the negative; so conclusively, indeed, that it is inconceivable that anybody writing a history of the freedom of thought in 1933 could have reached Bury's conclusion.

Over most of the so-called civilized world to-day liberty of thought does not exist. Government is omnipotent and strictly irresponsible; the Press is its mouthpiece; education its propaganda; history its apologist; the arts its echo. As for democracy, the only form of government that has been able to tolerate liberty in the past, after fighting (and winning) a war for its ideals in 1914, it is to-day fighting for its existence.

### *Nineteenth-Century Hopes*

In the years before the War, and again in the years immediately succeeding it, it really seemed as if the long struggle for individual freedom against political autocracy and religious persecution might be drawing to a close. There were, of course, still reactionary countries in which, even if men might think what they pleased, they dared not say what they thought. But these were regarded as anachronisms, unrepresentative sur-

vivals from the bad past. It was assumed that it was only a matter of time before these too would fall into line, and societies which conceded the right of the individual to the free expression of his thoughts in speech, writing, and discussion constituted the universal order of civilized mankind.

Nor were these expectations without justification. In the democracies of the West the nineteenth century had witnessed the triumph of men's efforts to establish the principles of free discussion, free speech and free writing. Liberty of teaching and liberty of the Press were everywhere conceded in principle, and by no means always denied in practice; religious intolerance was palpably on the wane; the public mind was increasingly imbued by scientific standards of impartiality and scientific respect for evidence.

### *The Contemporary World*

Let us now, in the light of recent history, take a glance at the contemporary world. Looking back upon the aims in support of which our statesmen induced young men to volunteer to kill and to be killed in the last war, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that some deity has been indulging in the ironical pleasure of deliberately exposing the pretensions of their authors. We fought and won the War to make England a land fit for heroes to live in, with the result that unemployed heroes may be seen at large in the streets trying, by the sale of matches and bootlaces and by apologies for performances on musical instruments, to eke out the pittance with which the State rewards their efforts and staves off revolution. We fought and won the war to end war, with the result that in the year of writing we

spent £108,000,000 on preparations for the next war, which is £40,000,000 more than we expended in any single year before we finally put an end to war by winning the war to end it. Above all, we fought the war to establish liberty and to make the world safe for democracy, with the result that men are at present living under dictatorships open or disguised in Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Poland, Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Russia.<sup>1</sup> The spectacle of these dictatorships would not have depressed Bury more than it would have astonished him. In Germany, in Italy, in Ireland, in Bulgaria, in Rumania, in Poland, in Russia, in Japan, there is a strict censorship of speech and writing. Dictatorships have an inevitable tendency to equate disagreement with sin, and in the interests of the various dogmas which in these countries are supposed at once to enshrine the absolutes of political truth and to establish the sole criterion of political morality the suppression of all contrary views is ruthless and universal.

Over two-thirds of the so-called civilized world to-day men's minds have been sent to prison, and their rulers hold the keys of their cells. The Irish Free State seeks to make its citizens moral by refusing to admit the works of Aldous Huxley, James Joyce, and Bernard Shaw. The list of books prohibited in Canada runs to

<sup>1</sup> In Russia the dictatorship is of a different type, and exists avowedly for the achievement of valuable ends. It is by no means inconceivable that it should achieve at least some part of these ends. If it does so, and does so through the instrumentality of its present form of Government, then the strictures to which this, in common with any form of dictatorship, is in the name of liberty exposed lose much of their force. The issues raised are discussed in Chapter III, pp. 78-82. Since the above was written Bulgaria must be added to the list.

half-a-dozen octavo pages. Great Britain excludes Ulysses as obscene, and the United States, while admitting Shakespeare and the Bible, recently decided to be shocked by Voltaire and prohibited his works. Sometimes the world's censorships achieve comedy, as when the Indian Government refuses to admit over the frontier some of the early publications of the present Prime Minister and possible future Viceroy.

*The Multiple and Incompatible Dogmas of Absolute Truth*

There is, too, a wry comedy in the reflection that it is in the interest not of the same but of different and sometimes diametrically opposed dogmas that the prohibitions are imposed. Thus in Ireland nobody may read what Mr. de Valera and the Pope dislike, in Italy what the Fascist Party dislikes, in Germany what pure-blooded racial Aryans dislike, in Russia what Comrade Stalin dislikes,<sup>1</sup> while in India, under a recent ordinance of Lord Willingdon for the suppression of Communist literature, nobody, it seems, may read what Comrade Stalin likes. Dictatorships are not only sensitive to criticism, they are incommoded by truth,<sup>2</sup> and the object of these prohibitions is presumably to protect the minds of their subjects not only from contemporary criticisms damaging to the prestige of the Government,

<sup>1</sup> Russia, no doubt, is the scene of a great experiment whose outcome I am the last to wish to prejudge; but it is difficult for even the most sympathetic observer to restrain a gesture of impatience when he learns that, because of doctrinal differences between Stalin and Trotsky which he finds largely unintelligible and suspects of being based on personal rivalry, nobody in Russia is allowed to read Trotsky's great *History of the Russian Revolution*.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Herr Hitler's injunction to Germans "not to seek out objective truth in so far as it may be favourable to others, but uninterruptedly to serve one's own truth" (Hitler, *Mein Kampf*).



but also from the statement of those universal, political truths whose utterance would shame those who seek to suppress them.

Realizing the new power which scientific developments have placed in the hands of those who control propaganda, Governments have not hesitated to make use of all the avenues through which in the modern State men's minds are reached and their opinions formed—the Press, the cinema, the radio—to create a mentality in harmony with their wishes. It is not merely that opposition is destroyed, criticism silenced, dissentients persecuted, opinion suppressed; more sinister is the fact that by means of specially prepared text-books in schools and specially doctored lectures at universities, by means of a press which is the pen of the State and a radio which is its voice, a definite cast of mind is artificially created in citizens.<sup>1</sup> With rare exceptions, culture, truth, and thought as such no longer exist on the Continent of Europe. There is only Communist Culture, Nazi truth, Fascist thought. In a word—and the most appropriate word has been said by Dean Inge—"these new dictatorships have arrogated to themselves a power over men's minds unprecedented in history." They are "far more tyrannical, more searching in their inquisitorial methods, than the rule of any Czar, Sultan, or Emperor."

### *Some Illustrations*

A few examples taken at random from the contemporary world show that Dean Inge does not overstate

<sup>1</sup> Consider, for example, the implications of Herr Hitler's pronouncement: "The most important issue for the National Socialist Party is not the taking over of power, but education. Education in the fascist corporate State is not education in the school alone, but in every milieu (path) of society."

the case. I have spoken of the imprisonment of men's thoughts. But the modern dictatorships are not content to close men's minds; they must also deprive their bodies of freedom for fear that their words should reach the minds of others. In a single recent year there have been 50,000 arrests for political reasons in India alone. The 150 major prisons in Japan contained 65,000 prisoners in December 1933, an increase of 15,000 over the average of recent years. "If any newspaper reader," says the *Japan Chronicle*,<sup>1</sup> "were asked what was the cause of the prison congestion, he would ascribe it without hesitation to the persecution of 'thought.' . . . Hardly a day passes that we do not have some reports of arrests of supposed Communists. . . . The other day it was announced that at last the arrests might be mentioned of something over 2,000 members of a single Society who had been taken up in batches since the beginning of the present year." The figures given for the arrests of Communists in Japan since 1928 are certainly formidable enough. Rising from 1,850 in 1928 to 9,212 in 1932, they maintain a yearly average of about 5,000. It is not, perhaps, in the circumstances matter for surprise that the Education Board of the Tokio Municipality should be reported<sup>2</sup> to have added the establishment of a new section of "Thought Inspectors" to its functions for the next financial year.

### Germany

The position under the Fascist dictatorships on the Continent is too well known to require description: nor is it a pleasant thing to dwell upon. In Italy and

<sup>1</sup> Issue dated December 7, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> At the end of 1933.

Yugoslavia, Poland and Austria, opinions which do not reflect those of the Government are suppressed, and prison is the punishment for dissent. But it is in Germany that the suppression of liberty has, with Teutonic thoroughness, been carried to its greatest lengths; it is the German tyranny and terror which have most shocked the opinion of the civilized world. At the time of writing<sup>1</sup> there are, on a conservative estimate, nearly 50,000 men, and on a more pessimistic view over 100,000, interned in concentration camps because of the opinions which they hold or the race to which they, or one of their grandmothers happens to belong. In these camps brutalities which recall the Middle Ages are, if report can be believed, of daily occurrence. The rubber truncheon, the steel rod, and the oxhide whip have superseded reason and argument as methods of influencing opinion, while the Nazis have resorted to the time-honoured method of seeking to endear their views to those who have ventured to disagree with them by the infliction of gross physical agony. Those who are suspected of harbouring opinions disliked by the Government are subjected to a system of espionage which recalls Tacitus's famous description of the system of delation under Tiberius. The texture of these men's lives is shot with fear and hatred. Every enemy is a potential informer, every friend a potential spy. Arrest, imprisonment without trial, and detention for months in a concentration camp, with the prospect of ill-treatment prolonged to the point at which prisoners carried beyond the limit of human endurance are "shot while trying to escape," are the price they must pay for the expression past or present of their

<sup>1</sup> January 1934.

thoughts. The taking of hostages is a recognised mode of retaliation upon those who escape.

Meanwhile the State has become an object of veneration, an idol of worship upon whose altar are sacrificed all the hard-won freedoms of civilized mankind.

### *The Manufacture of Men's Minds*

Not the least disturbing feature of the situation is the tampering with men's minds. It is not merely that the channels for the expression of opinion are blocked by a censorship so ruthless that in the fourteen months immediately succeeding the Revolution 1,000 newspapers were suppressed, while 350 ceased publication voluntarily, with disastrous effects upon the livelihood of printers and paper-makers.<sup>1</sup> More important than the withholding of opinion is its manufacture. I noticed above that the new dictatorships imprison men's bodies in order to prevent their words from reaching other men's minds; but in Germany they restrain them for a more positive reason—that they may manufacture the minds of the imprisoned.

For the manufacture of opinion children provide the most suitable raw material, the defencelessness of their minds making them an obvious target for propaganda. Hence we find Hitler defining "the chief aim of education" as "physical fitness and preparation for National Defence in the spirit of 1914, by means of obedience and absolute subjection to the will of the leader which must be expressed by the teacher. . . . *Only after that is the acquisition of knowledge*"<sup>2</sup> (my italics); while his lieutenant, Herr Schemm, Bavarian Minister of Education and Religion, defines the chief

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, April 2, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> *Mein Kampf*.

duty of teachers as that of becoming "the leaders of the storm-troops of the youth. The responsibility of the teacher towards the State," he continues, "is enormous. He must make the children who are entrusted to him fighters, warriors, heroes, and conquerors for the fatherland—since this is the training of character, and not the economic system, and this training is ruler and determiner of our fate."

But the manufacture of minds and character<sup>s</sup> does not stop with the children. Mr. Rennie Smith, who visited the Daschau concentration camp in the summer of 1933, gives an account in the *Manchester Guardian*<sup>1</sup> of the "healing" process to which persons suffering from what are known to the Nazis as "poisoned minds" are subjected. This process, as described by the commandant of the camp, included the placing of spies in the barracks to ascertain the "mentality" of the prisoners. As a result the prisoners were divided into four categories, as follows :—

1. Twenty-five per cent. only slightly damaged; easily curable and made good Germans again.
2. Twenty-five per cent. tainted, but good hopes of speedy recovery.
3. Twenty-five per cent. which would require considerable treatment before recovery could be hoped for.
4. Twenty to twenty-five per cent. so poisoned by Communist and pacifist doctrines that they were probably permanently incurable.

Put into plain English, the process of "healing poisoned minds" amounts in practice to the deliberate infliction of discomfort, hardship, and pain until those who began by

<sup>1</sup> Issue dated January 4, 1934.

taking different views on controversial questions from those in power end by sharing the views of those in power—or rather, since there seems no reason to suppose that any greater success attends the efforts of brutality to manufacture opinion in twentieth-century Germany than has attended them in the past, by professing to share the opinions of those in power. Mr. Rennie Smith concludes his account with a comment which deserves quotation:—

“ When I was leaving the camp I turned round to see what seemed like the whole 2,000 assembled, as in a silent mass meeting, before the barracks. The mute anguish and appeal of this multitude rose in streams to the blue sky of the sunny afternoon. What I found most terrible, in its human degradation, was not the detailed incidents of cruelty, but the wicked fact that a group of Germans should have the audacity to arrogate to themselves the right to ‘ heal,’ in ways like these, another group of Germans.”

The cruelties of the mediæval Church were at least informed by a logically consistent doctrine. Men were tortured for a time in this world in order that there might be no need for them to be tortured for ever in the next. Moreover, the Church claimed and believed in divine sanction for its denial of private judgment. But the dictatorships of modern Europe act on no better authority than a farrago of political theories whose pretensions have been exposed by every liberal thinker of the time, and of racial dogmas which, when they are not frankly unintelligible, base themselves upon a mythological reading of history which fails to impose upon anybody outside the ranks of those whose racial superiority they assert.

*Summary : Liberty's Eclipse*

Nor, because I have taken my illustrations primarily from Germany, should it be supposed that the casting of men's minds into governmental moulds is peculiar to that country. The academic oath that must be sworn by all holders of university posts in Italy—"I swear to be faithful to the King, to his successors, and to the Fascist regime, to observe loyally the Statute and the other laws of the State, and to carry out the duties entrusted to me with the aim of contributing to the greatest development of national culture"—affords distressing testimony to the contrary.

How far these widespread attempts to suppress men's liberty by Government action can be ultimately successful it is permissible to doubt. The suppression in one country seems to create a kind of spiritual vacuum which truth percolates across the border to fill from the next. Thus, in Germany, while the sales of German newspapers have declined since the Nazi revolution, the sales of *The Times* have enormously increased. It is manifestly impossible to stifle opinion everywhere if only because you cannot imprison all the people all the time, and history shows that truth is stamped out in one country only to spring up in another. Nevertheless, while the future is uncertain and may be better, the present is certain and bad.

So bad that, reflecting upon the illustrations of the contemporary eclipse of liberty which I have taken at random from different parts of the world, we shall find it difficult not to endorse Professor Laski's conclusion: "It is not exaggeration but sober fact to say that to-day, over the major part of the world, those habits

which, hardly twenty years ago, were part of the settled objectives of civilized ambition are either deliberately suspended or regarded with indifference as a relic of an ancient past." <sup>1</sup>

### *The Position in England*

What of the rest of the world, of the still-surviving democracies of France, America, and England? Although the disease in these countries is still in its infancy, symptoms are not wanting of its approach. Isolated cases of injustice and persecution there have, of course, always been, and that the spirit of liberty is still very much alive the storm of public protest aroused by such cases—by the imprisonment of Tom Mooney and the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti in America, by the imprisonment of Tom Mann in England, by the sentences imposed upon the Meerut prisoners in India—sufficiently testifies. It nevertheless remains a fact that there have been more prosecutions in England for the expression of opinions disliked by the Government during the fifteen years that have elapsed since the war than in the half century before 1914; that when Mr. Wal Hannington and Mr. Sidney Elias were prosecuted following the Hunger March of 1932 the police ransacked the premises, and ultimately sequestered the documents of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement—a procedure which, although subsequently denounced by Mr. Justice Horridge, who awarded the N.U.W.M. £20 damages for trespass and £10 for wrongful sequestration of documents, had been practically unknown in England since the days of Wilkes, when the

<sup>1</sup> Article entitled "Freedom in Danger," *Literary Guide*, January 1934.



denial of such indiscriminate right of search was established as one of the foundations of British liberty; and that, with a view, presumably, to circumventing the limitations upon official action imposed by Mr. Justice Horridge's judgment, the Government is, at the time of writing, proposing to reinvest the police with the right of search and sequestration by means of the new Sedition Bill.

### *The Sedition Bill, 1934*

This Bill, known as the Incitement to Disaffection Bill, was introduced by Sir Thomas Inskip into the House of Commons in April 1934. It places in the hands of the authorities unprecedented powers to prosecute all sorts of persons for offences which, as the law has stood in the past, were no offences at all. The Bill, as originally drafted, made the mere possession of a document, irrespective of any intentions on the part of the accused,<sup>1</sup> and without reference to the manner in which he acquired it, an offence. The only defence was to show "lawful excuse" for its presence on his premises. It was not necessary that the accused should be a seditious person himself; it was sufficient that he should be a person on whose property the police had found a document which a magistrate held to be seditious. To assist them in finding such documents the police are equipped by the Bill with rights of search so drastic that only a national emergency could possibly justify the interference with privacy and liberty.<sup>2</sup> The alleged

<sup>1</sup> It has subsequently been amended in several respects in Committee, and as a result it has since become necessary to show that the documents are in the possession of the accused with "intent to commit . . . an offence."

<sup>2</sup> The facilities for search provided for in the Bill were explicitly denounced nearly 200 years ago at the time of the Wilkes

object of this Bill is to prevent the dissemination among soldiers and sailors of seditious pamphlets. It is, however, so wide in its provisions as to constitute the most serious threat to liberty that has been known in England for two hundred years. As a result of criticism in the Committee Stage the Bill was subsequently amended in certain important particulars. The fact that it should have been introduced is, however, a straw which shows the direction of the wind; and the direction is assuredly an evil one. That people should be punished for illegal acts is a sound principle; that they should be punished because the executive holds that they may be presumed to be about to commit an illegal act is a thoroughly bad principle. The difference between the two principles is the difference between the rule of law and the dictatorship of the executive. Yet it is this second principle that the Bill embodies.

Scarcely less significant is the fact that, for the first time for a century, there has arisen in England a political movement which openly avows its enmity to free speech and advocates its suppression as part of its propaganda. This is the British Union of Fascists, which, according to some reports, is attracting considerable numbers of recruits. In its organ, *The*

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case, as subversive of the liberty of the subject. See the judgment of Lord Chief Justice Camden given in the case of *Wilkes versus Wood*, 1763 :—"The defendants claimed a right to force persons' houses, break open escritores, seize their papers, etc., upon a general warrant, where no inventory is made of the things thus taken away, and where no offenders' names are specified in the warrant, and therefore a discretionary power given to messengers to search wherever their suspicions may chance to fall. If such a power is truly invested in a Secretary of State, and he can delegate this power, it certainly may affect the person and property of every man in this kingdom, and is totally subversive of the liberty of the subject."

*Fascist Week*, it regularly attacks those outworn shibboleths of democracy—parliamentary government, minority rights, open discussion, and liberty of expression. A couple of quotations culled from the issue dated January 5–11, 1934, will illustrate the general drift:—

“The time has come not only for the rationalization of government, but for the rationalization of the expression of opinion.”

“Fascism therefore stands for the cessation of present political life, and in this sense for the suppression of political self-expression.”

That Fascism will ever become the government of Great Britain I do not myself believe. Nevertheless, the Fascist movement is to be taken seriously; it has come to be invested with a certain glamour, and the ideals which it embodies seem to exercise a peculiar attraction over the generation now coming to maturity.<sup>1</sup>

### *Free Speech at Oxford*

It is in this context that the free speech controversy which took place at Oxford in the autumn term of 1933 assumes a special significance. This is not the place for a detailed account of that celebrated controversy. Its significance consists in the fact that at a certain stage in its development the Vice-Chancellor and Proctors announced that there must be no public criticisms of University institutions such as the O.T.C. From this position they subsequently receded. Before they had done so, however, a protest meeting had been held which was attended by a large number of under-

<sup>1</sup> The possible significance of this attraction is discussed in Chapter VI, pp. 185–193.

graduates and some University teachers. The meeting was forbidden, and a few undergraduates in the audience who happened to fall into the hands of the proctorial "bulldogs" were "gated"—that is, confined to their Colleges after sun-down for two terms (subsequently remitted to one). Meanwhile certain restrictions had been placed on the October Club, a body predominantly Communist in inspiration and leadership, in regard to the holding of meetings and the public advocacy of Pacifist views to which no self-respecting society could possibly have consented. In consequence of its refusal to abide by these restrictions the October Club was suppressed, and at the time of writing (May 1934) it is still suppressed. It seems probable that the officials of the Club were tactless and mishandled their negotiations with the authorities. The fact remains that the authorities throughout showed themselves culpably indifferent to those principles of free speech which a University should be expected to hold in honour.

The refusal to allow criticism of the O.T.C. and the banning of the October Club did not by any means constitute the first attack on freedom of speech at Oxford.<sup>1</sup> Of the previous attacks, the last which was made on purely political grounds took place in 1926, when two undergraduates who were members of the Communist Party were required to sign a pledge neither to propagate their views publicly nor even to speak of them in private conversation, on pain of ex-

<sup>1</sup> Interested readers will find an admirable account of the whole subject in *Red Oxford: A History of the Growth of Socialism in the University of Oxford*, by M. P. Ashley and C. T. Saunders. See also an article in the *New Statesman and Nation* for December 2, 1933, entitled "Are Undergraduates Individuals?" by Frank Hardie, Ex-President of the Union.

pulsion from the University.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter it seemed for some years that the only sphere in which freedom of speech remained to be won was that of sex. Meetings addressed by Lionel Britton and Dr. Norman Haire in the Trinity Term of 1931 met with disapproval, and during the next term an inwardly amused official of the Labour Club was asked by an outwardly worried Proctor whether Vera Brittain, who was billed to speak on "Marriage and the State," was likely to be for or against marriage.

### *New Seriousness of Undergraduates*

In the last two or three years, however, the controversy over free speech has been revived and become more acute. Undergraduates are taking a new and more serious interest in the doings of the world in which they live. Inevitably, since, instead of offering them, as for the most part it has done in the past, the prospect of secure and comfortable employment, it now elaborately educates them only too often for enforced idleness. It is only natural in the circumstances that the undergraduate should find his attention drawn with a new urgency to a consideration of the reasons which have produced so regrettable a change. Why, he asks, should the system under which he has been brought up encourage him to train his mind and cultivate his faculties, yet offer him no adequate employment for his mind, no creditable outlet for his faculties? It is not surprising if he finds the answer to this question in

<sup>1</sup> There is a story of Lord Birkenhead, who was then High Steward of the University, having asked the Head of a College to send down one of the offending Communists, and being favoured in reply with a quotation from John Stuart Mill's essay "On Liberty."

the defects of a political and economic order of which he shows an increasing disposition to be critical.

And, inevitably, the new mood of serious and urgent questioning in the young reacts upon the authorities. Officially the traditional English respect for free thought and untrammelled criticism is proclaimed. "There is," said the Vice-Chancellor, speaking at the National Peace Conference at Oxford in July 1933, "a realization of what we in this country now regard as axiomatic—the right of the individual . . . to full personal liberty." It was only a few months later that the same Vice-Chancellor prohibited the formation of an Oxford University Anti-War Committee, and suppressed the October Club. The only possible inference would seem to be that in his view undergraduates are not "individuals." Nor is it without significance, in the light of the growing stresses and menace of our time—the stresses of an economic system strained to breaking point, the menace of a war which may well destroy our civilization—that it is criticism of the O.T.C. that is prohibited, a Communist club that is banned. The anonymous gift to the Vice-Chancellor, at the height of the controversy, of a popgun, a box of toy soldiers, and a copy of Milton's *Areopagitica* would not in the circumstances seem to have been entirely inappropriate.

### *Neglect of Mill's Principles*

These matters upon which I have so briefly touched—the new seriousness and urgency in the approach of young men to political and economic questions and the stiffening of authority in reaction to their mood—bring me to the considerations which have led to the

writing of this book. The principles which it sets out to affirm—the principles of liberty of action, of liberty of opinion, and of full freedom of expression in speech and writing for opinions whatever they may be—are, it is obvious, not original. They have been stated far better than I can state them in Mill's famous essay "On Liberty." Why, then, seek to restate them? There are, I think, a number of reasons which make their restatement a matter of importance. Of these the most important is the contemporary neglect of Mill's principles, to which the foregoing brief summary of the state of liberty in the modern world bears melancholy witness. The principles upon which Mill laid stress—the right of every individual to free and full development, the right of every individual to the free and full expression of his thoughts in speech and writing, these rights—the fact is, alas, only too obvious—are increasingly denied. Moreover, as Mill was the first to realize, these principles of liberty are also the principles of democracy, or, rather, they imply them and are implied by them, since democracy is the only form of government which has hitherto been able to tolerate the liberty of its citizens. When democracy is strong and the voice of the people is heard individual liberty is apt to be respected. When democracy declines liberty declines with it, and when government by a duly elected parliamentary majority is superseded by the rule of the party, the group, or the dictator, who hold power in virtue of their ability to seize it rather than by popular election and consent, liberty is only too often destroyed. This, as we have seen, is the situation over large areas of Europe to-day, and in face of these spreading tyrannies it behoves

those who believe that Mill was on the whole right to proclaim the faith that is in them.

*Classes of liberal<sup>1</sup> Thought*

This obligation is not at the moment being accepted. There are still liberals in England; an instinctive liberalism is, indeed, the characteristic background of English political life. But, while the fortunes of Liberalism as a political party have declined, the principles of liberalism as a social creed have been taken for granted. They are still being taken for granted to-day when they are being threatened, and, if we are not careful, they will still be taken for granted to-morrow after they have been destroyed. In respect of their attitude to liberty, English liberals tend to fall into three main groups. The largest group consists of those who take it for granted. They value liberty, and are not unaware of the battles that have been fought to win it. But they believe it to have been won, won past all possibility of loss. The struggles of our fathers for the elementary rights of freedom of thought and speech are for them a tale of "old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago." They do not realize that these battles may have to be re-fought. They have forgotten that "the price of liberty is perpetual vigilance." A second and smaller class realizes the danger. Alive to the significance of events on the Continent, its members are determined, if they can, to prevent their repetition in England. But

<sup>1</sup> The word "liberal" is deliberately printed with a small l to indicate that it is being used in its old sense—the sense in which it denotes the habit of enlightened and progressive thinking, since the habit of enlightened and progressive thinking is not the monopoly of any particular political party.



they envisage the struggle as a struggle for the maintenance of the *status quo*; it is, for them, a struggle to preserve the liberties we have; they do not see that it is necessary to increase the liberties we have if the liberties we have are to be preserved.

### *The Positive Use of Liberty*

A third, the smallest class, has grasped this truth. Its members realize that the cause of liberty cannot stand still; that it must either advance or retreat; that it is not enough to preserve what we have, but that we must use what we have to obtain more. Realizing the danger to our civilization which arises from man's inability to use for the improvement of his condition the productive power which science has placed at his disposal, and from the mental inertia which refuses to modify ancient traditions to fit new needs, they would free men and women not only from the interference of authority with their actions and with the expression of their thoughts in speech and writing, but also from the restrictions of economic privation, the disability of insufficient education, the influences which are exercised over their minds by the thousand and one agencies which exist to manufacture public opinion for private interest or private profit. They believe, in fact, that men and women are truly free only when their bodies are free from want and their minds from external domination. Only an economically prosperous community endowed by a rational system of distribution, with protection against economic privation, and by a rational system of education with protection against propaganda, can, they hold, be regarded as a free community. Therefore, the fight for

liberty is not for them a negative fight to preserve what our fathers have won: it is a positive fight to free the bodies of the people from economic hardship, and the minds of the people from domination by unscrupulous interests. These men, then, would use the liberties we have won and still possess—the liberty of advocacy, of argument, and of persuasion—as a means to the winning of new liberties, seeing in attack the best form of defence. It is my belief that this third class of liberals is right, and that the positive attitude to liberty which I have indicated is a necessary extension dictated by modern developments of the principles which Mill laid down—an extension which he would have been the first to endorse. It is the necessity for this extension which constitutes my second ground for endeavouring to restate and reapply his principles.

### *The Mood of Contemporary Youth*

A third is afforded by the new mood of seriousness in contemporary youth to which I have already referred. The post-war generation is over and the post-post-war generation has arrived. It differs markedly from its predecessor. Gone are the cynicism, the disillusionment, the flippancy of the post-war years. Instead there is a tendency to take once more the gods of our grandfathers from the shelves on which our fathers have placed them—the gods of simplicity and earnestness, of authority and leadership; even, it would seem, of faith. The change can be seen most clearly in the debates of such a body as the Oxford Union, which, if we may judge from the reverberations of the celebrated "Oxford Resolution," at once leads

and reflects contemporary student opinion. Five years ago the actual content of a speech at the Oxford Union was comparatively meagre. The epigram reigned supreme. To make a witticism, to point a jest, to coin a *bon mot*, to introduce the calculated patch of purple—these were the objects of the Union orator. Appropriate remarks, he would tell you, as he cheerfully ransacked the eighteenth-century wits for his epigrams, were meant to be appropriated; originality was merely skill in concealing origins.

To-day the atmosphere is different. The speeches tend to be uniformly serious; their virtue is sincerity, their defect dullness. Without eloquence or wit young men denounce the provisions of the new Unemployment Act, analyse the Government's Housing policy, or canvass the prospects of the international control of civil aviation. There are, I think, two main causes for this change. The first is the growing sense of political and economic emergency—an emergency which is recognized to be none the less serious because its prolongation over a number of years fatigues the sense of excitement and dulls that of alarm. There is a realization that the financial crisis of 1931 was not an isolated phenomenon, but as deep-rooted in its causes as it is likely to be far-reaching in its effects. In fact, not to put too fine a point on it—and the Communists do not shrink from putting it in the round and in the large—it is a symptom of a chronic disease which is the inevitable and irresistible decay of the whole capitalist system. Young men who live continuously with crisis have no patience with "the harlot of the arts," and oratory *tout court* has declined as the sense of urgency has grown.

To the second reason I have already referred. For the first time within living memory the student of to-day goes into a world which appears to have no need of his services. When his predecessor went down he could look forward to a job, or at least to the reasonable prospect of one. To-day this is no longer the case. Of thirty men and women who a year ago took their degrees in a certain Department of London University with which I am acquainted, and went into the world to seek the employment for which their education had prepared them, only five at the time of writing a year afterwards have succeeded in finding it. And, inevitably, young men and women about to enter a society which offers them encouragement but no openings are moved to ask why this should be so, and with a puzzled bewilderment endeavour to analyse the factors which are responsible for their predicament. While the resultant attitude is one of inquiry, the resultant mood is one of receptiveness. Politically and spiritually guideless, the contemporary young are dry tinder to flare to the spark of whatever generous enthusiasm can catch them. It is to this mood that Fascism has appealed in Germany and Communism in Russia. In this world of potential followers there is no reason why right leadership should not evoke on behalf of the ideals of liberty and equality the youthful enthusiasm which, on the continent, has been exploited for the evil ends of intolerance and brutality. In any event, those of us who care for liberty and still believe in democracy cannot afford to ignore the challenge which the mood of youth offers, or to leave the field open to our rivals merely because the seed we have to sow seems to us too familiar to

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require re-sowing. To the young the time-honoured principles of liberty and democracy are not familiar.

*Staleness of "liberals."*

The mood of liberal-minded publicists to-day is too often one of disillusionment. A note of impatience sounds in their exhortations. A certain staleness pervades the atmosphere in which they enumerate the old truths. The mood is understandable enough. There is a staleness of mind no less than a staleness of body; the publicist no less than the athlete can be over-trained, and many of us to-day have lost our freshness through years of unprofitable propaganda.

In the years immediately preceding the war the efforts of liberal thinkers were animated by a new hope. It really seemed for a time as if the bad old world of privilege and poverty might pass away and a new one of peace and plenty be born. For a time that hope burnt brightly; it still animated the thought and literature of the post-war years. Its waning coincided with—it may even in part have caused—the labour troubles that culminated in 1926. To-day it seems almost to have faded from the horizon of men's thoughts. To-day, after sixteen years of unremitting propaganda, liberal publicists see the ideals in which they believe derided on the continent and in England faint-heartedly acclaimed. So powerfully in the books of men like H. G. Wells and Bertrand Russell, so frequently in those of their numerous followers, have the ideals of a fuller and freer life for man been set before the public that many of us find it difficult to believe that they should not have become universally familiar. Oppressed with this difficulty, men of liberal

opinions are increasingly inclined to adopt one of two alternatives. Either, they think, mankind is incorrigible and will not embrace the truth when it sees it, or, conceivably, it is not after all the truth with which mankind has been presented. Conceivably they themselves may have been wrong.

### *The Belief in Rationality*

The adoption of the first alternative implies precisely that scepticism in regard to human rationality which such men as Mill, under whose banner many of those to whom I have referred first took the field, regarded as the sin against the Holy Ghost; for it was a fundamental presupposition of the thought of the Utilitarians that man was rational—rational in the sense that, if the truth were presented to him often enough and clearly enough, he would in the end embrace it. It is John Stuart Mill himself who in his Autobiography tells us of his father that “so complete was my father’s reliance on the influence of reason over the minds of mankind, whenever it is allowed to reach them, that he felt as if all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read, if all sorts of opinions were allowed to be addressed to them by word and in writing, and if by means of a suffrage they could nominate a legislature to give effect to the opinions they adopted.” And, speaking of himself and his friends, John Stuart Mill goes on to say that what they “principally thought of, was to alter other people’s opinions; to make them believe according to the evidence, and know what was their real interest, which, when they knew, they would, we thought, by the instrument of opinion, enforce a regard.

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to it upon one another." What is the implication? That if you argue well enough, cogently enough, and persuasively enough in favour of a certain view, then, if that view contains some element of truth, you can ultimately induce other people to accept it; and, further, that by virtue of their acceptance of it, their actions will be modified.

### *The Power of Thought*

The power of thought to affect men's minds and to influence their actions tends at the moment, owing to a variety of reasons, of which the influence of the new psychology is perhaps the most important, to be under-estimated. It is, nevertheless, very great. Often apparently negligible in the immediate present, its effects are felt in the long run. Religious toleration was once the ideal of a few harmless philosophers, a crotchet in the brains of a few apparently useless martyrs. To-day over large parts of the Western world it is in great measure conceded. The theory of democracy was revived in modern times by a few fanatics in Cromwell's army. It was carried by Puritan emigrants to America, was fought for in the War of Independence, and, reimported to Europe by Lafayette, became one of the ideals that inspired the French Revolution. Socialism began as a creed of a small number of isolated idealists—Owen, Saint Simon, Fourier, and Lassalle—early in the nineteenth century. To-day it is a great; and in some quarters still growing, force which may transform the world; while its Marxist development, born of the studies of an old man reading and writing in the British Museum, has shaken every Government in Europe, and may eventu-

ally compass the overthrow of the whole economic system under which we live. The movement which Mill led for the emancipation of women, originally derided as a bee buzzing in the bonnets of a few unpractical idealists, was ultimately carried to political triumph by the sheer force of the arguments in its favour and the enthusiastic heroism which those arguments engendered in its supporters.

It may be impossible at the time to tell whether a given system of ideas will be fruitful or not, but if it embodies a true vision of men's needs, if it contributes to their advancement, if it makes for their happiness, and if those who advocate it have the ability to show that this is so and the courage and the patience to continue to show that it is so in spite of persecution or ridicule, then the ideas in question will ultimately be adopted, albeit modified in the adoption, and bear fruit in action. Herein lies the ultimate justification of propaganda; herein, too, as Mill was the first to see, the ultimate justification for liberty for the propagation of every kind of idea and for its unfettered discussion. Reason, no doubt, is distorted by prejudice, blinded by instinct, warped by passion, swayed by self-interest. Nevertheless, through the shifting veils of darkness which prejudice and passion spread over men's minds the light of truth will in the end penetrate, provided only that it is made to shine with sufficient brightness. Hence the duty which falls upon those who tend its lamp to ensure that the flame of truth shall be bright and generous. Mankind, in a word, is not, in spite of all the evidence to the contrary, incorrigible, and truth, like murder, "will out" if it is given a sufficient chance.



*The Oncoming of the Young*

The general case for the re-statement of familiar truths is reinforced by the circumstances of the moment. Whilst the attitude of the post-war generation to ideas was listless or contemptuous, the post-post-war generation, as I have tried to show, is terribly in earnest. "We have dinned into men's ears, until we are sick of the sound of them, the arguments for liberty and democracy, for freedom of thought and speech, for the full development of individual personality; we cannot believe that men should not know them by this time." So the writers and speakers of my generation. . . . They forget those waves of young men who come yearly flooding into our universities, bringing minds that are virgin wax for the impress of ideas, to read afresh the old books, to take part anew in the old discussions, to canvass again the old arguments. These opinions which are so old to us are new to them, and if through weariness we do not voice what we believe to be the truth, we neglect our duty. Commonplace the case for liberty may be, but, as Stevenson said, "the commonplaces are the great poetic truths," and the more persistently the world ignores them the more urgent the duty which is laid upon their bearers to re-state them.

*Justification for Book*

My conclusion, then, is this. There is a natural hesitation to embark upon a re-statement of the time-honoured case for liberty. It is not only that the arguments are old; it is also that Mill stated them so well that it is difficult to see how his statement can

be bettered. Nevertheless, this hesitation should be overcome, first, because, if we have faith that the case is true and that human beings are rational, it has only to be stated often enough and well enough, to be accepted by their intelligences and realized in their lives; secondly, because there comes yearly to maturity a fresh generation of young minds to which the arguments which seem to us wearisome and stale are fresh and vital, and by whom the case that seems to us to have been fought and won so often has to be fought and won again; and, thirdly, because the generation now coming to maturity is in a quite special sense a serious-minded generation, anxious for principles and a creed and ready to give earnest attention to any case that is put simply and seriously before them. The quality which, as it seems to me, the young men and women of to-day respect above all others is that of seriousness. A serious re-statement of the case which has seemed to so many of us in the past decisive cannot, I am convinced, but have its effect upon this contemporary mood.

I say that I am convinced, but there remains always the other alternative—that I and most of the liberal thinkers of my generation may be wrong, and courtesy demands that I should make my bow to it. It may be the case that liberty is not a good, that it is not the primary duty of the State to guarantee it to its citizens, that men's personalities must be disciplined to purpose not their own, and that no thought of theirs which is distasteful to the holders of power should be given expression. It may, in short, be the case that man was made for the State and not the State for man. Courtesy, I say, requires me. to.

acknowledge this hypothesis. Moreover, it is peculiarly fitting that one who praises liberty should preserve a lively awareness of the warning contained in Cromwell's salutary exhortation: "I beseech you, gentlemen, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible that you may be mistaken." Yet, if we were to hesitate in our acceptance of the abstract case, what is happening on the Continent to-day should be, as I hope to show, a sovereign dispeller of our doubts.

It was by a direct judgment of value that the great democrats of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries recognized that liberty was a good. Their children have had to wait until the third and fourth decades of the twentieth century for the confirmation of that judgment by the consequences which are seen to attend its neglect.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FACTORS HOSTILE TO LIBERTY

#### *Introductory*

IN the last Chapter I briefly surveyed the condition of liberty in the Western world and noted its almost universal decline. An adequate defence of liberty can be based only on an understanding of the circumstances which threaten it and the arguments by which it is assailed. In this Chapter I propose to indicate some of the circumstances which have led to the decline of liberty; in the next the arguments by which the decline is justified on moral grounds or affirmed to be necessary on those of expediency.

Liberty is, in my view, inalienably bound up with democracy. When democracy has been strong, as in ancient Athens or in England before the war, citizens have enjoyed a large measure of liberty. Moreover, fresh liberties were constantly being gained. When democracy has declined, or has been superseded by other forms of government, liberty has declined with it. Under a dictatorship liberty disappears. Hence the circumstances which have produced the decline of liberty are in large measure identical with those which have led to the decline of democracy. It is these circumstances which I propose to examine.

## I. CIRCUMSTANCES MILITATING AGAINST DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

1. *Blindness of Economic Action*

Pre-eminent among these is the growing size and complexity of the modern State. So vast are the contemporary political and economic fields, so far-reaching the forces which condition events, that, so far from controlling, statesmen seem unable even to understand them. Reflecting upon the history of the past twenty years, one is driven irresistibly to the interpretation of phenomena with which Hardy's philosophy has made us familiar, and contemplates, as he does in *The Dynasts*, events moving to their predestined conclusions unaffected by the cerebrations of statesmen in council. Of the major events of this period—the War, the Coal Strike, the General Strike of 1926, the growth of unemployment, the economic collapse of 1929, the financial crisis of 1931—few have been such as human beings have willed. Most have taken place in direct opposition to human will and intention. This seemingly "determined" appearance is worn by human affairs when the factors which condition events are mainly economic. Economic actions are the results of the freely operating wills of individuals. They occur because some person or body of persons believe that by acting in a particular way they will improve their economic position. But, though economic actions are willed, their consequences are not; indeed, their consequences are often precisely the reverse of what their agent wants. Let us suppose, for example, that it is announced that a bank is about to fail. Immediately there is a run on the bank by

depositors anxious to withdraw their money. As a consequence the bank fails. This result, which is a direct consequence of every depositor acting solely with a view to his own economic advantage, is the exact opposite of what the depositors as a whole want. If a cry of fire goes up in a theatre, there is a mad rush for the exit. As a consequence the exit is jammed and numbers of the audience may be stifled, trampled, or burnt to death. The theatre example illustrates the same principle. Everybody having freely acted solely with a view to his own advantage, the cumulative result turns out to everybody's disadvantage.

The conclusion may be generalized as follows: The effects of economic actions spread out beyond the *immediate intentions of their agents, producing results* upon people unknown to the agents which neither they nor anybody else have intended. As the world becomes increasingly a single economic unit, the area affected by the consequences of economic actions grows more extensive. An old lady living in a Bournemouth boarding-house is unable to pay her bill because a strike in a Japanese cotton factory has wiped out her dividends, while coal miners in South Wales are thrown out of employment by the tapping of oil wells in Persia.

### *The Effect upon the Individual*

Because of this blindness of economic actions, an historical period in which events are determined largely by economic factors tends to discourage the politically-minded individual. Every politically conscious human being desires to play some part, however small, in the

direction of the affairs of the community. He wishes to feel that he counts, that his will can be made effective, that his desires and purposes matter. Nor should this attitude be deplored. To quote Dr. Arnold: "The desire to take part in the affairs of government is the highest desire of a well-regulated mind."

It is upon the existence and the alertness of precisely this political consciousness that democracy depends for its successful working. Nobody has realized this more clearly than Mill. As he pointed out in his *Political Economy*, (it is the direct and continuous exercise of the functions of citizenship that generates public spirit.) It is, he holds, the citizen who actively engages in the participation of affairs who "feels that, beside the interests which separate him from his fellow-citizens, he has interests which connect him with them; and that not only the common weal is his weal, but that it depends on his exertions." When, however, a man feels that the futures not only of himself, but of the community, are determined by forces over which he can exert no control his political consciousness is frustrated. To the extent that citizens cease to shape the ends of the community they cease to be citizens. (In a modern democratic community the ordinary man tends to lose all but the most remote contact with the State. It impinges upon him only when he has to pay taxes, serve on a jury, or cast his vote. Of these functions the first is as little likely to arouse his enthusiasm as the second is to engage his interest; while, as for the third, that highly valued suffrage which used to be regarded as the foundation of democracy, it is found to amount in practice to no more than the right to reject the slightly less unsuit-

able of two or more wholly unsuitable persons who descend upon the citizen once every five years or so from the clouds of the party headquarters in London.) To this situation the politically-conscious citizen, finding himself politically negligible, reacts in one or the other of two ways. He either becomes apathetic and turns his back upon politics in disgust, or he becomes frankly revolutionary and works for an abrupt and, if need be, violent change in a system which has squeezed him out. Both moods are inimical to democracy and destructive of that alert and intelligent interest in the concerns of the community, coupled with the will to co-operate in those concerns which democracy postulates.

## *2. Growth of Centralization*

Another effect of the complexity of modern society, an effect directly due to the size of the modern State, is the growth of centralization. (Local government diminishes in importance as the central administration increasingly encroaches upon its functions.) The transfer of the administration of Unemployment Insurance from the local Public Assistance Committees to two national bodies—a Statutory Committee to deal with insurance and a Public Assistance Board to administer relief—may be cited as an illustration. The tendency to centralization is reinforced by the developments of modern science. (The shrinkage of the planet brought about by the wireless, the telephone, and the aeroplane makes for the substitution of large administrative units for small, while increased facilities for transport have rendered devolution of governmental functions wasteful and unnecessary.)



(These tendencies militate against the initiative of the individual citizen in two ways. In the first place, as the powers of local bodies become restricted his incentive to serve upon them is diminished. In the second place, increase of centralization leads inevitably to an increase of uniformity.) Centralization engenders impatience with local differences and personal idiosyncrasies, and a tendency to treat everybody in terms of standard formulæ. The individual becomes a "case"; the citizen is forgotten in the statistical unit. Standardized administration is hostile to personality, regards individuality as a nuisance, and looks for its Utopia to Huxley's *Brave New World*. Whatever view we may on other grounds take of this "world" of Huxley's, we can scarcely regard its government as a democracy, or praise it for its respect for individual liberty.

### 3. *The Atmosphere of Crisis*

A state of crisis contributes to the same result. In war-time the Opposition disappears, or, if it refuses to disappear, is apt to be suppressed. The reason is sufficiently obvious. When times are threatening and men go in fear, they demand leadership and firm government. Just as unity of command makes for the efficiency of armies, so unity of purpose makes for that of governments. Criticism impairs unity and sows distrust, and because it does these things it is considered to endanger the public safety. Hence in critical times criticism is vetoed; opposition is regarded as purely factious, when it is not denounced as actually disloyal; while to venture a doubt or to urge an

alternative is to interfere with the man at the helm.

When the voice of opposition is silenced as at best a nuisance, at worst a threat to safety, liberty is obviously in danger. A Parliamentary Opposition is at once a safety-valve and a speaking-tube. Through it those who consider themselves to have been injured can blow off the steam of their grievance; through it the complaints of those who really are injured can reach the public ear. To suppress opposition is therefore to gag minorities and to stifle the voice of the oppressed. This is what happens in war-time, when the normal avenues of publicity are closed or monopolized by exponents of official views, while the channels through which the voices of those who are oppressed could have made themselves heard are deliberately blocked.<sup>1</sup> It also happens in a lesser degree in a period of prolonged economic crisis, when people are disquieted by the present and apprehensive of the future.

In normal times the man with a grievance, a message, a dogma, or an "ism" is in this country regarded as a harmless oddity whom his engrained dislike of ideas enables the ordinary Englishman to ignore with comfortable indifference. In times of stress the oddity becomes a nuisance and the nuisance a danger, while the amused tolerance normally extended to the "crank" turns into an exasperated dislike of the "enemy."

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to remember, although it was distressing to observe, how during the last war, as month succeeded month, the voice of protest on behalf of the conscientious objectors was in Parliament heard ever more rarely and with ever-growing impatience.

#### 4. *Clumsiness of Parliamentary Machine*

There are two related targets for criticism in the mechanism of democratic government. First, the ✓ Parliamentary machine is slow and cumbersome. Considered as an instrument for the making of laws it is, indeed, quite extraordinarily inefficient, and is tolerated only because in times of crisis, when many things are required to be done and to be done quickly if the State is to be preserved, legislation by Act of Parliament is largely superseded by the method of Orders in Council.

Now, the amount of business which falls to be transacted by the modern State is continually on the increase. To quote from Shaw's Preface to *The Apple Cart*: "Government, which used to be a comparatively simple affair, to-day has to manage an enormous development of Socialism and Communism. Our industrial and social life is set in a huge communistic framework of public roadways, streets, bridges, water supply, power supply, lighting, tramways, schools, dockyards, and public aids and conveniences, employing a prodigious army of police inspectors, teachers, and officials in all grades in hundreds of departments." This press of business exhibits the traditional method of transacting the affairs of State by Acts of Parliament which are debated clause by clause and line by line before they are finally passed after a number of readings as increasingly inadequate. The truth is ✓ that, in so far as the function of government is the making of laws, the procedure of Parliament is a hindrance and not a help to its performance.

• This is not the place to dilate in detail upon the

defects of Parliamentary procedure or to ventilate the criticisms by which it has recently been assailed. The criticisms are familiar, the defects obvious. It is not only the dictators who scoff at Parliaments, proclaiming the need for the firm hand, the undeviating purpose, rapid decisions, and legislation no less rapid to give effect to them, if the modern State is to be steered through the perilous shoals of the post-war world. Writers of the Left in democratic England who have been regarded as the friends of democracy in the past do not hesitate to urge the criticisms and to stress the defects, while Socialists complain that, given the existing machinery of Parliament, it would take a Socialist majority with a clear mandate from the electorate at least half a century to pass the legislation necessary for the introduction of Socialism. Hence the suggestion, ever more insistently urged, that the existing machinery for the passage of legislation through Parliament should be drastically revised as the only alternative to its forcible suppression. "The only sane course," according to Shaw, "is to take the step by which dictatorship could have been anticipated and averted, and construct a political system for rapid positive work instead of slow nugatory work, made to fit into the twentieth century instead of into the nineteenth." <sup>1</sup>

### 5. *Evils of the Party System*

The criticism of the Parliamentary machine extends, indeed it concentrates, upon the party system. One of the first actions of the dictatorships which have established themselves in Europe has been the sup-

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *The Apple Cart*.

pression of Opposition parties. In so far as rational grounds are adduced for this step, they may be summarized as follows: opposition, from its very character, must hamper and impede government. "The business of the Opposition," in fact, "is to oppose." This function it must and does perform irrespective of the merits of that which it opposes. When times are difficult and rapid measures are required a government cannot afford its energies to be diverted and its attention distracted by the necessity of meeting this purely factious opposition.

The current discontents with democracy which are voiced in Shaw's later plays, and especially in *The Apple Cart* and *On the Rocks*, urge this criticism with great force. Parliaments are accused of talking instead of doing, and Ministers are represented as wasting their time and frittering their energies in meeting arguments and combating opposition when they ought to be governing. The questions which they are represented as putting to themselves are not "Is this what the present emergency demands?" "Is this right?", but "Will this win votes?", "Will this please?", "Will this arouse opposition?" Hence eloquence and skill in argument came to be more highly valued in politicians than firmness, judgment, knowledge, and vision.

Further, under the party system each successive Ministry seeks to undo the work of its predecessor. This did not matter so much during the nineteenth century, when, as Professor Laski has pointed out, both the parties were agreed on essentials—that is to say, they shared the same views as to the kind of society under which they wished to live and as to the way in which they thought that it ought to be managed.

But between the supporters and the critics of the capitalist system to-day there is no such fundamental agreement. Consequently a party system which successively returns to power Conservative and Socialist governments has become a menace to the community. For, when the community requires a coherent policy consistently pursued over a period of years, what it in fact gets is a series of quick-change policies which cancel each the results of the others. The housing policies of successive governments in England since the War afford a lamentable illustration of this theme.

## II. CIRCUMSTANCES MILITATING AGAINST THE FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL CITIZEN

A variety of circumstances combine to render the average individual a less satisfactory citizen of democracy than he used to be, and therefore a less potent guardian of liberty than Mill hoped he would be. These are the circumstances which have engendered what is known as the mass mind.

### *The Generation of the Mass Mind by Education*

Prominent among these are the effects of popular education. I shall return to the subject of education in the fifth Chapter, where my theme will be the deliberate attempt which in the name of education is made by dictatorships to manufacture minds under the pretext of training them, and to inculcate the ideas of the government instead of giving men the capacity to form their own.<sup>1</sup> If I may here anticipate the distinction there made—the distinction between the giving of information and the formation of intelligence, between instruct-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V, pp. 149-151, and Chapter VI, pp. 188, 189. •

ing the young what to think and training them to think for themselves—I am constrained to point out that the effect of popular education is often to accomplish the former without also effecting the latter. As a result, the modern electorate possesses only too often the ability to absorb ideas without the power of sifting them. It is not without significance that the appearance in 1890 of the first halfpenny paper, the *Daily Mail*, coincided with the close of the first decade after the passage of the Education Act of 1870. It was the avowed purpose of its founder to attract and exploit the interest of the first generation which had come to maturity since State education had made the man in the street literate. Thereafter it and its peers have sought to be at once the prop and the mirror of his opinions, and have catered for tastes which they have themselves created on the plea that their only function is to give the public what it wants.

There is on all hands to-day a disappointment with the effects of popular education. In particular it is charged with having effected a certain standardization of humanity. The school, say the critics, clothes men's minds with a covering of ready-made standard opinions as the tailor clothes their bodies with ready-made standard suits, the caterer fills their stomachs with ready-made standard comestibles, and the jerrybuilder shelters their persons with ready-made standard houses. In Italy and in Germany this standardization of humanity is welcomed; indeed, it is deliberately encouraged, so much so that the uniform mental outlook which in England we regard with dismay as an unforeseen by-product of our educational system would on the continent appear to be its main objective.

Even in England, however, the tendency of education to generate the mass mind would, according to some critics who ought to be competent judges, appear to be on the increase. At the Conference of the Educational Association in London in January 1934 Mr. J. Howard Whitehouse, Warden of Bembridge, Isle of Wight, voiced the widely felt apprehensions of the teaching profession. After referring to the deliberate production of the mass mind in Germany and Italy, "a mind fundamentally ignorant without a capacity for noble interests . . . capable of great and unspeakable cruelty," he proceeded to enumerate the O.T.C., the cinema, and even the wireless as factors which in England are co-operating to manufacture a similar product. That sturdy individualist, Sir Ernest Benn, has dotted the i's and crossed the t's of Mr. Howard Whitehouse's diagnosis. "The youngster of to-day," he says, "starts in an educational machine which is a mass-production machine. He is treated by the million by teachers who themselves are produced by hundreds of thousands, and seem more interested in retaining their pay than in anything that the machine produces. When the youngster goes to work his whole life must be regulated. Outside his work he reads a newspaper produced to attract the coppers of the million. He listens to the wireless, and has the soul-destroying experience of knowing that he is applying his heart and mind, so far as he has got any, to the same tune or words that a million others are absorbing. He goes to the cinema, and, whether he likes it or not, absorbs all the atrocities that come out of Hollywood. This young man is being compelled by circumstances beyond his control to become a robot."



in a fatalistic scheme of things which must cause him to believe that he can count for little."

*The Generation of the Mass Mind in Employment*

Sir Ernest Benn no doubt over-states the case, yet few would be found to deny that the portrait he paints is without some basis in fact. And he is probably right in thinking that education is not the only factor making for standardization. The influences which at school contribute to give the modern citizen a mind exactly like that of his neighbours are continued, in some ways they are intensified, when he leaves it.

By his employment, for example, and by his amusements. The whole tendency of modern industry is towards large-scale production and increased mechanization. Large-scale production and increased mechanization mean that human beings are employed in ever larger units, and that their employment consists in the tendance of machines. Thus modern industry gathers increasing numbers of human beings together in the same place and causes them to perform increasingly similar operations. That to some considerable extent human beings are both created by their environment and moulded by their occupations all psychologists are agreed. Hence those who have the same environment and follow the same occupations will inevitably tend to grow alike.

Nobody was more alive than Mill to the effect of employment upon the character of human beings. What a man habitually does, that in fact, according to Mill, is what he becomes, since "the main branch of the education of human beings is their habitual employment." Now, you cannot, as Samuel Butler pointed

out, spend the major part of your conscious life in attendance upon machines without insensibly acquiring the habits of machines which impress something of their own natures, their regularity, their uniformity, their incuriosity, their soullessness, upon their life-long servitors. Hence the often expressed fear that, if present tendencies continue, men will develop into efficient automata, who, without initiative or creative ability, will play the part of cogs in the social mechanism.

It is to this fear that Karel Kapek's play, *R.U.R.*, has given dramatic, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* literary, form. Nor would any competent observer wish to deny the substance of present fact upon which these imaginative superstructures of the future are based. There is a real danger that modern industry will substitute the robot for the craftsman. Once the typical worker was an individual human being working alone or with two or at most three colleagues in his workshop, turning his hand to a number of diverse operations, each of which exploited his talents in a new way and called forth the exercise of a new faculty. To-day his type is too often that of the worker ant endlessly performing the same operations in the ant heap of the factory. When we reflect upon the implications of this substitution it is not altogether matter for surprise that the "character" in the old sense of the word should be disappearing from the community, and that personal eccentricity should be looked upon, with disfavour by those whose increasing homogeneity makes them distrustful of the novel, the different, and the independent.

*The Generation of the Mass Mind in Leisure*

Increasingly, too, machines dominate men's amusements. To step on foot throttles, insert coins into metal slots, scan headlines, crowd through clicking turnstiles, rush headlong through the air or over the earth in mechanisms propelled by petrol—these constitute the modern notion of leisure-using and of entertainment. Almost it might be said they stand for the specifically modern notion of the "good life." All these avocations of leisure depend upon the use of machines, and all, therefore, make for standardization in their users. They are all creation-saving, energy-economizing, thought-inhibiting.

Increasingly we "enjoy" a "press the button" existence. We no longer walk or climb; we ride in a car or on a mountain railway. We no longer play or sing for ourselves; we invoke the gramophone to do our playing and singing for us. We do not read aloud or tell stories; we turn on the radio. The essays of Aldous Huxley afford a series of striking variations in invective upon the theme of standardized amusements. In the essay "Revolution," which appears in the volume *Do What You Will*, he looks forward to a millennium in which science has assured mankind of comfort and a competence in return for two or three hours' machine-minding a day, only to provoke a succession of revolutions culminating in the break-up of civilization by men who, unable to tolerate the boredom of creation-saving amusements protracted over eight or nine hours a day, have yet grown incapable of amusing themselves. Already, he tells us, "leisure" has been completely mechanized. Now that, with every fresh elaboration of the social organism, the

individual finds himself yet further degraded from manhood towards the mere embodiment of a social function ; now that ready-made, creation-saving amusements are spreading an ever intenser boredom through ever wider spheres, existence has become pointless and intolerable."

*Summary. Effects of Science on the Community*

Most of the tendencies which I have briefly enumerated spring from the application of science to human affairs. It is science which is responsible for the growth in the size of the State, for the growth in its complexity, for the increase in the facilities for transport which have made the world economically one, for the increased facilities for communication between mind and mind which have made possible a new domination of minds by minds.

To summarize in a word the social effect of science, it has made men's minds more accessible than they have ever been before to influences from without. As a consequence, a new power has been given to those who control the avenues—the Press, the cinema, the gramophone, and the radio—through which men's minds can be reached. This new development may become, has indeed on the Continent already become, one of the greatest dangers to the freedom of the human mind.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is impossible, I find, to resist the temptation of relieving the occasional gloom of this book by the insertion of illustrations culled from contemporary Germany. The two following are particularly pertinent to the present argument.

"The *Prussian Press Service* states that wireless sets cannot be seized for debt. Every home must have one set, so that the owner can listen-in to official pronouncements" (May 21, 1934).

"The Summary Court at Hamm, in Westphalia, has sentenced a father and his son to eighteen and fifteen months' imprisonment respectively for listening at their homes, to

Governments enjoy a hitherto unprecedented power of instilling positive opinions into the minds of their citizens. But this is not the extent of the danger.

Equally prejudicial to independence of thought is the fact that it becomes increasingly difficult for minority opinions to find avenues of expression or to obtain publicity for the arguments in their favour. The B.B.C. refuses to allow non-Christians to hear talks by non-Christians on Sunday, and the publicist who is asked to make a film for insertion in the news reel expressing his views on some question of the day is warned that he must not dwell upon the dangers of the next war or state the arguments for pacifism.<sup>1</sup>

Nor is it only men's intellectual life that is threatened. Writers like Bertrand Russell look forward in their gloomier moments to a scientific society of the future in which all the resources of physiology and psychology are exploited by unscrupulous governments to manufacture populations of tractable robots; while Aldous Huxley has portrayed for us the life and structure of such a society with the detailed vision of imaginative genius.

I consider these developments to be so important for my theme that I have devoted to their examination a section of a later Chapter.<sup>2</sup> For the present I content myself with establishing their immediate relevance. This, in the light of what has been said, is sufficiently clear. There can be democracy only where citizens are individuals. There can be liberty only where men's minds are independent and they value independ-

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gether with their former party friends, to talks broadcast by the Moscow wireless station." (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, June 7, 1934.)

<sup>1</sup> This reflection is founded upon an experience of the writer's.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter VI, pp. 173-176.

ence. Mill, looking backward to man's savage past, saw in political apathy and human uniformity the chief obstacles to the advance of the race. "Inactivity, unaspiringness, absence of desire," he warns us in *Representative Government*, "are a more fatal hindrance to improvement than any misdirection of energy; and are that through which alone, when existing in the mass, any very formidable misdirection by an energetic few becomes possible. It is this mainly which retains in a savage or semi-savage state a great majority of the human race." Dean Inge, with his eyes not upon the savage but upon the machine, repeats as a warning for the future what Mill derives as a lesson from the past. "A completely mechanized society would," he tells us, "be a servile State in which all spiritual and intellectual life would be strangled. The consummation of this type of polity may be studied in the bee hive or the ants' nest."

### *Effects of the Decline of Religion*

It is possible that the contemporary decay of belief in a personal God is a factor which has had its influence in making easy the path of the dictator. The subject is a large one, and raises controversial issues which cannot, it is obvious, be discussed here. I venture, however, to suggest the following sequence of ideas.

The supernatural God of religion has grown increasingly vague and shadowy. Most men have a need to believe, and, deprived of a God in heaven, tend unconsciously to look for one on earth. They find him in a political leader. Religious faith is, in any event, a simpler matter than political understanding, and to invest a political leader with divine attributes fulfils

the double purpose of providing an object for the ordinary man to worship and enabling him to forgo the disagreeable process of political thinking.

Moreover, the dictator, as a god, has the advantages of being easily recognizable (Hitler, with his moustache and his light rain-coat, is much easier to grasp than the nebulous image of the supernatural divine); of flattering the ordinary man by his likeness to himself—he is pleased to think that “a chap just like me” can govern the State; and of presenting a broad pair of shoulders on to which he can shelve his political responsibilities. “After all, it is his job, not mine. That is what he is there for,” says the man in the street to himself.

The above suggestions are put forward tentatively. They have the advantage of explaining the facility with which the modern ruler—Lenin for example, or Hitler<sup>1</sup>—tends to become invested with divine attributes, and are supported by the Freudian conception of the origin of religion in the need of a divine father to take the place of the earthly father we lost in infancy. In Freud’s view it is the main function of religion to supply such a father. This function the State appears to be taking over.

### III. ESTIMATE OF THE FORCE AND PERMANENCE OF THE “CIRCUMSTANCES”

#### *Introductory*

It would be idle to belittle the force of the above considerations, or to deny that the tendencies to which

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Dr. Franck’s impressive reflection: “Hitler has made the gods jealous” and his syllogism “Hitler is lonely; so is God; Hitler is like God.” (Quoted by John Gunther in *The New Republic*.)

they direct attention exist and are growing. The threat which these tendencies constitute both to liberty and to democracy is formidable—so formidable, indeed, that if what has been said constituted all that could be said on the subject democracy might be abandoned forthwith as a form of government unsuited to civilized peoples and liberty dismissed as the most impracticable of men's delusions. Nevertheless, while fully admitting the cumulative force of the circumstances now militating against democracy, it is my duty to insist upon certain mitigating considerations which an impartial picture of the situation is bound to take into account. One cannot, it is obvious, dispose of circumstances as one can disprove arguments; but one is entitled to express a doubt whether the lessons to be drawn from them are always such as is popularly supposed. There may be contrary circumstances, or the circumstances may bear a different interpretation.

### *1. Significance of the Roosevelt Experiment*

That there is an apparent growth of determinism in human affairs is true. It is true also that societies increasingly feel themselves to be in the grip of forces beyond their control. But that this determinism is not absolute, that the forces are neither inescapable nor uncontrollable, the Roosevelt experiment seems likely to show.

Roosevelt took office at one of the blackest moments in American history. The banking system of the United States was paralysed. Trade had sunk to an unprecedented level. The catastrophic fall in share values had ruined hundreds of thousands of speculators. Unemployment had reached the gigantic total of



thirteen millions of persons. The farmers were bankrupt and rebellious. This situation was not the outcome of any unusual degree of human wickedness, but was the result of forces set going by the actions of human beings prompted, as the actions of most human beings in a modern society are prompted, by the hope of economic advantage. It constituted, therefore, an admirable example of that determination of human affairs by the blind results of economic actions which, as we have seen, is so marked a feature of the modern world. It is, moreover, the feature which, as I have tried to show, is most disconcerting to the politically conscious individual, most discouraging to human effort.

In less than a year the situation in America has been transformed, and to all intents and purposes it has been transformed by one man. It was through the exercise of the traditional qualities of human leadership, foresight and initiative, decision and intrepidity, through the vision to conceive and the resolution to carry out what had been conceived, that Roosevelt effected the transformation, changing not only the economic situation, but radiating his own cheerfulness through the psychology of the American people. As a result he has succeeded in infecting with his optimism even his own political opponents. "The whole country," said Representative Bertrand Snell, leader of the Republican Party in the Lower House, in January 1934, "indeed the whole world, is leaning more and more towards Liberalism, and political parties will have to yield to this tendency. We realize this drift, and the Republican Party will take a more Liberal attitude in future."

One can hope rather than believe that Representative Snell was right in diagnosing a world-drift towards Liberalism; but the sentiment, even if mistaken, is a striking testimony to the power that one man can, by sheer force of leadership and personality, exert upon the minds of others. Whatever view we may take of Roosevelt's economic policies, we must, I think, concede his triumphant demonstration of the truth that, if man was ever master of his circumstances, he is so still; that, if his political destiny was ever under his control, he can still control it; that, if circumstances could ever be moulded by human will and conquered by human effort, there is nothing peculiarly intractable about the present situation in the face of which man must needs declare himself impotent.

2 and 3. *Centralization and Crisis. The True Moral of the "Circumstances"*

The growth of centralization is a fact; the atmosphere of crisis seems likely to become permanent. Both, we may agree, render effective expression of the popular will more difficult.

They also render it more necessary. (Centralization, for example, increases the power of the bureaucracy.) We are in England fortunate in possessing a bureaucracy which is fair-minded, enlightened, and incorrupt; but it is, nevertheless, a bureaucracy, and as such is characterized in its degree with the peculiar defects of bureaucracy. That the official should forget the individual in the case, in order the better to bring all cases within the bounds of a standard formula, is perhaps inevitable. But the fact that it is inevitable renders it all the more important to preserve the

channels through which the individual can make his voice heard.

"It is only the wearer who knows where the shoe pinches." The remark is basic, crystallizing in a sentence a large part of the fundamental truth which democracy embodies, and I shall make no apology for invoking it again as my argument proceeds. Its immediate application suggests that since even a perfect law perfectly administered may irk imperfect people, and since it may well be impossible for its nearly perfect framers and administrators to conceive just how it would irk them, it is essential that the imperfect persons who have to obey the laws should be empowered and encouraged to say just how and where they find them irksome. The inference is that the need of an alert and active opposition to safeguard the liberty of the subject is increased rather than diminished by the growth of centralization and the spread of bureaucracy. In this connection the suggestion which has recently been made for the establishment of a Bureau of Public Criticism, concerned to receive and to investigate complaints brought by the public against officials, is worthy of consideration. Such a Bureau would take the form of a government department, standing to other government departments in precisely the relation in which government departments stand to the public.

The circumstances of "crisis" point to the same moral. The fact that an alarmed population is impatient with minorities makes it more not less important to protect them. A frightened herd cannot tolerate an outsider. All, it insists, must come in and identify themselves with the crowd for its safety, if not for

theirs. All must think what the crowd thinks, approve what it approves, fear what it fears, act as it acts.

The greater the alarm, the greater the demand for uniformity, and, we might add, the greater the need to withstand it. In the last war a few conscientious objectors insisted on drawing attention to the more embarrassing parts of Christ's teaching and suggested that Christians should take them seriously to the extent of trying to act in accordance with them. Further, they claimed, in the name of their consciences, the liberty of so acting themselves. This tactless reminder to the community of what its members professed to believe did not increase the popularity of the conscientious objectors. They were denounced, persecuted, bullied, and imprisoned. A few Members of Parliament identified themselves with their cause and sought to safeguard for them the right of "objection" conceded by the law. In some measure the efforts of these men were successful. They prevented the death-penalty from being inflicted and mitigated the worst of the persecution. No lover of liberty can in retrospect find it in his heart to regret that the protest of the conscientious objectors was made, and that men could be found in Parliament to champion the unpopular minority who made it, or can view with equanimity a surrender to circumstance which would use the very fact of crisis to prevent a similar protest from being made and championed in the future.

#### 4 and 5. *Parliament as the "Grand Inquest of the Nation"*

The fourth and fifth circumstances—the clumsiness of the Parliamentary machine and the professionally

opposing Opposition—are, I think, construed in a sense unfavourable to democracy only on the basis of a misconception of Parliamentary function. It seems to be unquestioningly assumed to-day that the main business of Parliament is to make laws. Yet this assumption is a comparatively modern one. That it was the business of the Government to legislate became an accepted principle only about the middle of the nineteenth century. As late as 1863 Queen Victoria's Speech from the Throne contained no hint of forthcoming legislation, nor was the omission regarded as a ground for complaint.

The fact that Parliament is an extremely bad instrument for the business of law-making should not occasion surprise when it is remembered that it was not in fact designed for the purpose. Parliament was originally conceived as an assembly of the nation's representatives in which matters of national concern could be discussed and grievances ventilated. It was the "Grand Inquest of the Nation." That such inquest should be held is of the highest importance; indeed, it is an indispensable safeguard to liberty. Parliament is admirably fitted to carry it out, and there is much to be said for the view that it should to-day return in conception and function to the tradition of the past.

The nature of the machinery which, if this view should find favour, should be designed for the framing of legislation lies outside the scope of this book. I would, however, refer the reader to the proposals contained in the *Report of the Committee on the Reform of the Machinery of Government* (a Committee which sat during the War under Lord Haldane's presidency),

which was published by the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1919. This Report contemplates a Cabinet freed from departmental duties as the effective source of legislation, while it fully safeguards the power of Parliament as a check upon the Cabinet.

### 6. *The Danger of the Mass Mind Examined*

The growth of the mass mind and the resultant standardization of taste and opinion are, in truth, a serious menace, to which I shall return in a later Chapter.<sup>1</sup> I permit myself here two observations only :—

(a) *Alertness of the Teaching Profession.* So far as this country is concerned, the teachers are fully alive to the danger. While this book was in preparation, a Conference of Educational Associations was held at University College, London.<sup>2</sup>

The realization that a deliberate attempt is being made on the Continent to train the young to blind obedience to the dictates of the party in power had, it was obvious, moved the speakers at this Conference to deep apprehension, which voiced itself in alarmed protest. Whatever differences the delegates might display upon other questions, there was one upon which they seemed to be unanimous. They were resolved that there should be no attempt to shape the minds of the young to any purely national or political purpose. "It is very unwise educationally," said Dr. Unstead, "to attempt to form opinion at too early an age." "Education must be impartial," declared another speaker. "We must reduce dogma to a minimum,"

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI, pp. 173-176.

<sup>2</sup> January 1934.

said a third. It would have warmed the heart of Mill with the object lesson of Italy and Germany before him to hear the English teachers asserting so stoutly their refusal to prostitute their power over the minds of the young to political ends.

(b) *The Formation of Taste.* In the second place, while the vulgarization of taste, the obliteration of individuality, and the growth of standardization engendered by the popular Press, the cinema, advertisements, and to some extent the wireless, must be conceded, it is permissible to doubt whether these results need be accepted as final. They may be only a stage, although a necessary one, in a process which will transcend them. Tastes newly formed tend to be crude and to call into being crude forms of satisfaction. Good taste is not instinctive, but acquired. It is formed gradually, the fruit of boredom or disgust with what is bad and a resultant demand for something better. Unless we are to despair altogether of the human spirit, we have no alternative but to suppose that the process which has resulted in the formation of cultured minorities in our own and previous civilizations will, provided that it is permitted to continue, in due course affect the majority.

These new agencies for reaching men's minds and moulding their tastes, of which the wireless is the most potent, are instruments for good as well as for harm. They may become educational influences which, rightly used, will stimulate the desire for information, the quest for knowledge, the pursuit of speculation, the improvement of taste, the demand to know what great men have thought and said memorably about life—Whatever, in a word, constitutes the adventure and

promotes the advance of the mind. It is by no means a foregone conclusion that they will not be so used.

There are, indeed, already signs that educational influences at work to-day are producing in increasing numbers of the population not only a new rationality, but also a new culture. Figures contained in the report issued in the spring of 1934 by the Board of Education show that the number of books issued in the preceding year by the urban Public Libraries of England and Wales was 136,231,833. The number has increased annually during the last decade, and is seventy millions larger than—that is to say, rather more than double—what it was nine years ago.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Power of the Wireless*

If, in conclusion, I may be again permitted to refer to the Roosevelt experiment, I should like to emphasize the significance of the methods adopted by the President in America to popularize his programme. These appear to me to offer the happiest augury for the future of democracy. Whatever may be the ultimate outcome of President Roosevelt's plans, we can, I submit, have nothing but admiration for the way in which he has "put them across." Again and again, during the

<sup>1</sup> The figures for the year ending March 31, 1934, published by the Libraries' Committee of the Poplar Borough Council, afford confirmation and illustration of the conclusions of the general report. The illustration is illuminating. For the period 1905-14 the number of volumes issued by the six libraries of the borough was 2,408,179. During the ten years 1915-24 the number increased to 2,780,659. During the last decade 1925-34 it rose to 6,291,736. During this last period the actual population of the borough has decreased by over ten thousand. In the last two years there has been a considerable decrease in the number of fiction and juvenile books demanded and an increase in the number of non-fiction books.



critical months which succeeded the formation of his administration, he has over the wireless directly addressed the American people. Simply and lucidly and familiarly, he has explained what he is trying to do, why he is trying to do it, what will be the probable effects of his actions, and what obstacles stand in the way of success. He has, that is to say, treated the American people, in whom the disease of standardization was thought, and rightly thought, to be most advanced, as rational, intelligent citizens who would respond to a rational and intelligent appeal. And they have, in fact, responded. In a world in which force has seemed to be increasingly superseding argument as a means of advocacy, this confident reliance upon the method of reasoned exposition, which is, after all, the only method compatible with the liberty of the subject, is one of the most hopeful signs for democracy that has yet appeared.

You have only to argue well enough, cogently enough, long enough, and patiently enough, on behalf of your views, and then, if you are right, you will in the end persuade people, in spite of prejudice, bias, self-interest, and stupidity, to agree with you. Such was the gospel of Mill; such is the gospel of every democrat and every rationalist. This gospel involves the assumption upon which democracy rests and by which liberty is justified—the assumption, namely, that man really and in spite of all the evidence to the contrary is at bottom a reasonable being. In an age in which increasing numbers hesitate to accept this assumption it is to Roosevelt's lasting credit that he has had the faith to act upon it. May his faith restore ours.

### CHAPTER III

## THE CASE AGAINST LIBERTY

### *Introductory*

IN this Chapter I propose to outline the modern case against liberty, and, so far as I am able, to answer it. I shall summarize the arguments currently used as briefly as I can, and the critics of democracy who make use of them must forgive me if I confine myself to statement and do not seek to render what is stated plausible or attractive. It is due to the enemy that I should present his case, but I am under no obligation to win it. The arguments in question may be divided into three groups—the economic, the expert, and the moral.

### I. THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENT AGAINST LIBERTY

#### *A. The Free Tongue and the Full Stomach*

I belong to a generation which was brought up to consider political liberty as a thing of little account. It was not merely that we took it for granted; it was also that, being Socialists, and, what was more, newly converted Socialists, we were taught to believe that political liberty was valueless without economic security. Liberty was a Liberal fetish, a purely middle-class good. It was, no doubt, very pleasant to be able to criticize whomsoever and whatsoever one wished, and to give the Government of the day a piece of one's

mind. But to the under-nourished or over-driven worker such right of criticism was a luxury of which he had neither the energy nor the wish to avail himself. What he craved was a full stomach, not a free tongue. Lacking the former, he had neither the wit nor the inclination to make use of the latter.

What, after all, we used to demand in our speeches was the advantage of being able to disprove the existence of the Deity (not that one could do even this if one were poor, since one's theological polemics, not being couched in the language of polite scholarship, were apt to get one into trouble under the Blasphemy Laws), or to cast a free vote every five years for the least unsuitable of two or three grossly unsuitable persons whom one had never heard of before and would probably never see again, if one's only alternative to starvation was to sell oneself body and soul to an employer for thirty shillings a week? As Mr. Shaw was presently to tell us in the Preface to *The Apple Cart*, "the voters have no real choice of candidates: they have to take what they can get and make the best of it according to their lights, which is often the worst of it by the light of heaven." This was the mildest of the Socialist arguments. Its upshot was that liberty under the present economic system was a merely academic good.

### *B. Liberty, too, is the Opium of the People*

A more extreme version sought to represent political liberty not only as a thing indifferent, but as a definite bar to the achievement of economic equality. Many left-wing Socialist writers and almost all Communists have come to represent political liberty as an opium

of the people only slightly less pernicious than religion itself. ✓ Political liberty means in practice the right of voting every five years, sometimes oftener, for a representative whom one has not selected. The votes so cast either have some influence or they have none at all. In the former event the influence is just enough to enable the workers to extort from the governing classes sufficient concessions to stave off revolution. The English governing classes, it is said, are preternaturally cunning in the matter of these concessions. Just as they take the revolutionary edge off material privation by the contrivance of the dole and the distribution of coal and blankets, and the revolutionary edge off spiritual discontent by endowing churches to diffuse the Christian doctrines of meekness, unselfishness, and satisfaction with that station of life into which it shall please the State to call God's servants, so they take the revolutionary edge off political discontent by a series of legislative concessions such as the Trade Boards Acts, the Old Age Pensions Act, the Unemployment and Health Insurance Acts, which may be regarded in the light of sops thrown to the working classes to dull rather than to satisfy the appetite for revolutionary change, much as Mrs. Squeers doped the hungry morning appetites of her boys with molasses and treacle. From this point of view political liberty is represented as a prop to bolster up Capitalism by making it tolerable. It is a safety-valve through which discontent can work off the steam which would otherwise lead to an explosion. By its means the governing classes are enabled to represent the concessions which rivet more firmly the chains of Capitalism upon the necks of the workers as political

advances won under a free and democratic Constitution by the votes of the people.

*C. Political Liberty the Enemy of Economic Equality*

The influence which the workers have been able to exert in the past in virtue of their possession of political liberty, always small, is, it is said, rapidly diminishing. To-day it is negligible. The reason is that economic concessions from the Capitalist classes to the workers are possible only in a time of Capitalist expansion, when the abounding profits of Capitalism leave something over and to spare. The social reforms which characterized the pre-war years of the twentieth century were crumbs dropped from the rich man's table upon which for a time the poor contentedly fed. To-day, however, the era of Capitalist expansion has ceased, and there are accordingly no more crumbs. To-day there is no more fat to be cut away, for Capitalism is cut to the bone. Consequently the limit of the concessions which political liberty can be used to secure has already been reached. Those who care for political liberty and wish it to be preserved are, therefore, contending for something which, from the point of view of the depressed classes, is a shadow from which whatever substance it once possessed has departed. The above constitutes a brief summary of an argument which is urged with considerable force in Professor Laski's book, *Democracy in Crisis*.

The effect of this and the preceding arguments is to suggest that there is a definite antithesis between political liberty and economic equality at the present stage of Capitalist development. If political liberty has substance, such that those who possess it can

make use of it to obtain concessions, the effects of its use will be to perpetuate Capitalism. If it has none—and to-day it has, in truth, very little—to present it to the people as a thing desirable is to put them off with a shadow. Those who value purely political goods such as democracy and liberty are, therefore, accused of mistaking this shadow for substance. Moreover, the working classes are, it is said, increasingly recognizing political liberty for the imposture that it is, and becoming as a result increasingly impatient of those who praise it and ask them to rally to its defence in face of the encroachments with which it is threatened by Capitalism in decay. "The people," in short, "are sick of twaddle about liberty when they have no liberty."<sup>1</sup> The conclusion is that a man must make his choice between Liberalism and the shadow of political liberty and Communism and the substance of economic equality.

Two directly opposing judgments of value are, in fact, involved. "The difference between you and me," Shaw is reputed to have said to an old-fashioned Cobdenite, "is that you were brought up in England on Mill and liberty; I brought myself up in Ireland on Marx and leisure."

## THE DEFENCE

### *A. Political Liberty a Good in Itself*

The case for the defence must begin with an argument addressed to liberals.<sup>2</sup> My generation has grown up in a world which has taken liberty for granted. Ever

<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister in Shaw's *On the Rocks*.

<sup>2</sup> I do not necessarily mean members of the Liberal Party. Hence the small "l." (See footnote to p. 23.)

since I first attended political meetings I have been regaled with perorations about the sacred cause of liberty, the importance of preserving it, and the duty of handing it down undiminished to posterity: "Britons," we have sung, "never shall be slaves." By sheer frequency of peroration and sheer power of platitude the concept of liberty has lost its meaning, like a hat that loses its shape because everybody wears it. We have taken liberty so long for granted that we have forgotten what it means. Or were in danger of forgetting it. For, now that it is threatened, we are beginning to realize how great a good it is.

It is easy for Shaw to belittle political liberty, easy precisely because he has it; for it is only in a land where liberty is enjoyed that the phenomenon of Shaw could occur. 'Free thought is a pretence,' says Shaw, 'democracy an imposture; the Press barons dictate opinion; to record a vote is no consolation for an empty stomach.' He forgets to add that he has himself through a long career contrived to trample upon every one of the prejudices of the Press barons, to denounce a society which permits stomachs to be empty, to live to see them, as a result of the denunciations of himself and his friends, at least partially filled, and to obtain an audience of unexampled dimensions for his contumaciousness simply because he happens to live under a system which concedes liberty of speech and of writing. Mussolini or Hitler would give short shrift to Shaw. Even the magnanimity of the admired Stalin might be found to have its limits. As for Mr. de Valera . . .

For all this I am very grateful for Shaw. What follows? That it is good that Shaw should have had liberty. The fact that political liberty does not entail

economic security—nobody in his senses ever dreamed that it could, or claimed that it did—should not blind us to the fact that it is worth having in itself. The fact that economic security is a good should not cause us to forget that political liberty is also a good, or wilfully to jettison the latter in our natural disappointment at having failed to secure the former.

### *Present Fears for Liberty*

Political liberty, I repeat, is a good in and for itself. That this is so, and that we know it to be so, is testified by our present fears on its behalf. In Italy, in Germany, in Austria, the elementary liberties of the subject have disappeared. Men can no longer say, read, or hear what they choose. The slightest breath of criticism brings summary arrest, and those arrested may be detained for months without trial. It is impossible for an impartial observer to contrast the position in these countries of liberal thinkers and social reformers, of men of advanced and enlightened views on whatever topics, with the privileges which in England they still enjoy, and not to recognize that their position here is beyond comparison preferable. That we ourselves recognize this fact the numerous organizations which have been formed in England since the early months of 1933 for the defence of civil liberties, the imposing list of signatures to the Liberty and Leadership Manifesto published in February 1934,<sup>1</sup> the widely felt fears, tacit and expressed, lest England too should go the way of Central Europe, are sufficient evidence. And the recognition carries with it the implied admission of the value of political liberty.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 203.



But, it may be contended, most men do not, after all, take an active interest in politics. Liberal thinkers are necessarily few; progressives and reformers unrepresentative. The right to criticize the Government is neither wisely used nor widely valued. To the working classes it is of little account. Weighed in the scales against economic security it is of no account at all, and it is by the working classes that the contrary demand of economic security is pressed.

### *B. Political Liberty and the Working Classes*

And the contention is simply not true. It is for precisely the rights that are comprised under the titles of "democracy" and "liberty" that the working classes fought with passionate earnestness in the last century. That they should not be entitled to combine, to form Trade Unions, to vote in secret, to send their representatives to Parliament; that men should be unequal before the law, that they should be prevented from the open expression of their political views, that their thoughts must be voiced in secret—these things seemed to them so intolerable that they were prepared to risk starvation, imprisonment, even death, rather than that they should continue to endure them. Ninety years ago the Chartist movement was as distinctively the channel through which working-class aspirations expressed themselves, as characteristically the ideal to which they looked for the fulfilment of their hopes, as is the Socialist movement to-day. And the goods which the Chartist movement was formed to secure were in the main civil and political, not economic goods. To-day they have been in large measure

achieved, and, like all goods in whose enjoyment men have grown up, they are under-valued. Or were, until the spectacle of working-class movements on the Continent being deprived of these so hardly won goods has reawakened something of the old fervour in their defence. The ruthless suppression first of the German, and subsequently, in spite of a heroic resistance against machine-gun odds, of the Austrian, working-class movements, has rallied their British comrades to the passionate defence of the liberties which their fathers won. The fear which animates them to-day, a fear which makes them apprehensive even of the alleged unconstitutionality of Sir Stafford Cripps, is a fear of the deprivation of precisely those liberties which the arguments I have outlined would present as valueless.

It is, indeed, true that this generation of liberal writers and thinkers in its preoccupation with Socialism has been apt to take liberty for granted; it is true that as a result there has been a danger of the case for political liberty going by default. What is not true, as recent events have shown, is that liberty is not in fact valued, or that, when it is threatened, the threat is not recognized as a danger to the whole working-class movement and a repudiation of the ideals for which it stands. It was Daniel Webster who wrote that God "grants liberty only to those who love it and are ready always to defend it"; Mill that perpetual vigilance is the price of its maintenance. Recent events have shown that Mill's warning has been too long forgotten. They have also shown that in this country at least it is again remembered. We may venture to hope that it has not been remembered too late.

*C. What Liberty Involves*

The above argument is addressed mainly to those advanced thinkers who have come to take liberty for granted, or who seek to minimize its value. To Socialists, who are apt to disparage political liberty in their preoccupation with the need for economic change, I would suggest the following considerations.

The belief that there is an antithesis between political liberty and the economic changes which Socialists desire is a delusion. It is only necessary to examine the content of the word "liberty" for the fallacy which is involved to become apparent. (Let us consider a standard definition of liberty. Thomas Paine's will do for choice. "Liberty," he says, "consists in the right to do whatever is not contrary to the rights of others." Paine is here concerned to define liberty of action, the liberty to go about our concerns without let or hindrance. What must be added to embrace the full content of political liberty? That we should be able freely to express our thoughts and desires, on the platform, at the street corner, or in the Press; that we should be entitled to worship whatever God we please and to worship him how we please, and that we should equally be entitled to worship no God at all; that we should be able, if wronged, to invoke the law in our defence against the highest in the land; that no official of the State, no representative of the law, should be allowed unjustly to oppress us with impunity; that we may not be accused or our persons detained save for offences determined by the law of the land and in accordance with the procedure which the law prescribes, and that, should we be so accused, we may

not be held in custody without being brought to trial; that the law should be one which we ourselves through our elected representatives in Parliament have a voice in determining, and that, if we dislike it and can persuade a sufficient number of our fellow citizens to our way of thinking, we should be able to change it—these things and others like them taken together constitute what we mean by liberty.) Having stated them, I cannot deny myself the pleasure of asking those Socialists who make light of liberty as a thing of no account, regarding it as a superfluity, or even seeing in it a dangerous distraction, which of them it is that in their view militates against the economic changes they desire. The onus of producing reasons is on them, and until reasons are produced—as they have not been produced up to the present—I must plead indulgence from the obligation of seeking further to answer this argument.

#### *D. The Economic Benefits Accruing from Liberty*

But I cannot, in justice to my case, stop here. I am constrained to carry the argument further and point out that, so far from being an impediment to economic change, the privileges which I have cited under the heading of liberty are its most potent instruments. Socialists demand a transformation of society in the direction of a planned economy, production for use instead of for profit, and economic equality. They recognize that the chief impediment to these changes is constituted by the vested interests in private property. How can they hope to overcome this impediment?

Broadly, there are two ways: the gradual transformation of the present system in response to the will

of the majority constitutionally expressed through the ballot-box, and its overthrow by a revolutionary upheaval. Postponing for the moment consideration of the second method, let us see what is entailed by the first.

### I. *The Method of Gradual Change*

It is entailed that those who desire economic change should be able freely to propagate their opinions, freely to choose as their representatives those who, if elected to Parliament, will voice their opinions, and freely to vote for the representatives they have chosen. If they send to Parliament a sufficient number of those who share their desire for economic change, then there is at least *some* prospect of the change being effected. (This, I know, is denied by many; the examination of the grounds for this denial will fall to be considered in connection with the second method.) Such changes have, in fact, been effected in the past, and are being effected in the present with such rapidity that what is known as social reform legislation has been the distinguishing characteristic of the present epoch. As a result, during the last hundred years the lot of the working classes has substantially improved.<sup>1</sup> It has also improved relatively to that of the monied classes. A steeply graded income tax, an excess profits tax, death duties, and estate duties have depressed the economic position of the wealthy. The provision of social services in the shape of Old Age Pensions, Unemployment and Health Insurance benefits, free

<sup>1</sup> Sir Josiah Stamp has calculated that the average level of *real* wages to-day is no less than four times as high as it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century. (See *Britain's Industrial Future*, by Sir Ernest Benn, p. 6.)

education, State-aided grants, and scholarships has improved the economic position of the poor. That some levelling of income has resulted is generally agreed. Nor is there any reason to suppose that these economic changes have reached their limit. On the contrary, if we may trust Mr. Keynes's celebrated prophecy that "in a hundred years' time the standard of life in progressive countries will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day," they may, if we are spared the catastrophe of war or revolution, be expected to continue. How have they been effected? By arguments addressed to men's reasons, by appeals to their sense of justice, and by the resultant pressure of voting power exercised through the ballot-box—in a word, by the exercise of precisely those political liberties which the Chartists won for England and which the Continental dictatorships deny. Nothing, indeed, in this connection is clearer than that the methods by which social reforms and the resultant economic amelioration of the position of the working classes have been achieved in this country could not have been pursued under a dictatorship. Social reforms are born initially of a burning sense of resentment against the injustices and inequalities of the existing régime expressing itself in a stream of speeches, articles, and books. Men listen to the speeches, they read the articles and the books, and they are converted to the views of their authors. Presently sufficient converts are made to send representatives to Parliament, and in due course, if the process continues, sufficient representatives are sent to Parliament to constitute a government which passes the reforms. In Germany, in Italy, in Austria, there are permitted

neither speeches, articles, nor books which are critical of the existing régime. There are no free elections, there are no workers' representatives in Parliament, and a government pledged to the economic changes that Socialists desire would not be permitted. The conclusion is clear. (Destroy the liberties won by political democracy, and you destroy the instruments of peaceful social change. In this sense political liberty is not an impediment to, but a condition of, the realization of economic equality; liberalism in the widest sense of the word is not the foe, but the indispensable ally, of Socialism.)

## 2. *The Method of Revolutionary Upheaval*

It remains to consider the other method of change—the method of violent revolution. This is no place for a discussion of the vexed controversy of evolutionary *versus* revolutionary Socialism. I am concerned with these alternative methods only in so far as their adoption would bear upon the question of liberty. I begin by registering my conviction that a revolutionary attempt to change the economic system of this country would fail. I cannot here defend this conviction at length. I have space only for one consideration in its support. It used to be said that the key to a revolution is the Army and the Navy. If these joined forces with a militant working class, anything might be achieved; and, since they are themselves mainly composed of working-class persons, such a contingency, so runs the argument, is always possible, and, should they be asked to fire upon comparatively defenceless strikers or demonstrating unemployed, might at any moment become probable. But the Army and the Navy are

no longer the key to the situation; or, rather, they are so only in the sense in which the Air Force is the key to the Army and the Navy. A mutinous battleship or a regiment which refused to obey orders, a concentration of organized and militant unemployed in Glasgow or London, could be blown out of existence by a very few well-directed bombs. Modern military technique renders numbers less important than they used to be and concentrates power in the hands of a comparatively small number of persons equipped with the latest instruments of destruction which science has perfected.

Now, the Air Force, unlike the Army and the Navy, is recruited largely from the middle classes; it is the spiritual home of the public-school boy.

For these reasons, I think a Fascist régime the most probable outcome of a revolutionary situation in England. Let us suppose, however, that a militant working class does in fact succeed in seizing power, and that an attempt is made to introduce a system of Socialism not unlike that prevailing in Russia. The result would be the almost immediate starvation of the people of this country, importing as it does some three-quarters of its food from abroad, unless some at least, and conceivably all of the following conditions were satisfied: (1) Russia had sufficiently advanced with her reconstruction plans to be able to feed not only herself, but also us. (2) The British Navy was intact and able and willing to convoy food from Russia. (3) There were simultaneous Communist revolutions in the food-producing English Dominions. We may, I think, safely add (4) Unless the Continent of Europe, and more particularly France, had also "gone Communist." Even if all these conditions were satisfied,



it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that during the inevitable period of armed conflict before the Socialist régime was established the closely knit and extremely artificial economic fabric of Great Britain would have been thrown completely out of gear and a considerable part of the population would have died of starvation.

*The Communist Theory of Liberty: Suppression of  
Liberty Temporary Only*

Let us suppose, however, that the attempt to introduce a Socialist society by means of a revolutionary *coup d'état* were successful. If history is any guide, the government that resulted would be no friend to liberty. Liberty is always diminished during periods of violence, and the civil wars in which revolutions culminate are, if the examples of France and Russia are a guide, no less inimical to it than are wars between nations; in fact, they are more inimical.

The lesson of past revolutions is frequently overlooked by contemporary Socialists, who believe that the results of a successful revolution in this country would be to place in power men of the disinterested idealistic type, who take upon themselves the unpopular task of advocating revolutionary Socialism now. This belief is a delusion. Revolutions can be carried through only by force. The employment of force throws up a new and different type of man, the dominating, executive type, who has been found in the past to use the powers with which successful force has endowed him for ends very different from those which originally led his followers to embark upon a policy of force. These ends are normally found to be incompatible with liberty, and liberty, both during the period of revolu-

tion and during the period which succeeds it, is accordingly eclipsed.

Communists do not hesitate to admit that the suppression of liberty would follow the success of their efforts. They claim, however, that such a suppression will be temporary only. A successful revolution will, in Communist terminology, be followed by a period of dictatorship, the dictatorship of the proletariat, which will firmly establish the new régime, finally liquidate counter-revolutionary elements, and defend the revolution from the attacks of external enemies. During this period the liberty (now enjoyed by the *bourgeois* classes, but not by the workers) to criticize the Government must, it is conceded, be withdrawn, since such liberty would be used by *bourgeois* elements to undermine and discredit the revolution. This withholding of liberty from one class in the interests of another, from the vestigial *bourgeois* in the interests of the triumphant working class, is, no doubt, regrettable. But, it is contended, it is no more unjust than the denial by *bourgeois* governments, under the Capitalist régime, of economic liberty to the depressed workers. In fact, it is less unjust, since, while the few now deny liberty to the many, the many will then be withholding liberty from the ever-diminishing few. When the danger of counter-revolution is over and the building up of a classless community is complete, the State will, in Lenin's phrase, "wither away," and the restrictions which have been placed upon liberty during the dictatorship of the proletariat will disappear.

*Criticism of the Communist Theory*

Without doubting the good faith of those who employ this argument, it is possible to be highly sceptical of its validity; for what precisely does it involve? That after a revolutionary government has during a period of years made the deliberate suppression of liberty part of its policy, it will, at a given point in time, deliberately reverse its policy and restore the liberty which has hitherto been withheld, with the result that views distasteful to the government will suddenly obtain publicity, and those who have been hitherto immune from criticism will suddenly find themselves assailed. Is this likely? Does history afford a single example which would permit us to regard it as likely? Have those who have won power by violence ever been known voluntarily to relinquish power, those who have been above criticism voluntarily to permit criticism? Yet, on this view, we are required to believe that those whom power has placed above criticism will by their voluntary and deliberate action suddenly permit the criticism which may lead to their relinquishment of power.

In a later Chapter<sup>1</sup> I shall give reasons for the view that dictatorship must, from its very nature, become as it grows older not less but more extreme, not less but more sensitive to and impatient of criticism. All history supports this view. Yet the argument which we are here considering maintains, and asks us to believe, the opposite—namely, that at a given moment a dictatorial government can reverse the engines,

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V, pp. 140-143.

relinquish power, declare itself superfluous, and, having denied liberty, concede it.

The method of gradual evolutionary change places no such strain upon our credulity. When political liberty is used—as I have maintained, it has been used in the past, and, as I have suggested, it can still be used in the present—to win economic security, which is another name for economic liberty, political and economic liberty advance together, the two being mixed in ever larger instalments as the development of society proceeds. This process involves no arbitrary break. There is no point at which rulers are expected to say: "Having now at last securely established economic equality, we can permit the restoration of political liberty, which we formerly found to be incompatible with our scheme." Instead, there is a gradual advance at every stage of which the political liberty already won is used by the depressed classes to secure a larger measure of the economic liberty which they still lack.

## II. THE EXPERT ARGUMENT AGAINST LIBERTY

This is briefly that democracy is a form of government unsuited to the complexities of the modern State. So difficult, it is said, has the task of government become that only men possessed of special qualifications and expert knowledge are fitted to undertake it: the people, in other words, are not fitted. The argument falls into two parts. There is, first, a criticism of the political frivolity and indifference of the democratic electorate; secondly, a criticism of the incompetence and venality of the governments they elect.

*A. Criticism of Electorate in a Democracy**The Argument of H. G. Wells*

Criticism of the electorate has of recent years become pronounced in the work of two men of genius who have a world-wide reputation as progressive thinkers and are in some sense, in this country at least, the literary fathers of Socialism. The fact that Wells and Shaw are numbered among its severest critics is undoubtedly seriously damaging to the cause of democracy. Wells has always advocated expert government from the introduction of the new Samurai in his *A Modern Utopia* to the ruthless scrapping by William Clissold of all our political institutions in favour of a self-imposed government of scientific experts. The main grounds for Wells's persistent scolding of democracy are the ignorance and indifference of the ordinary voter. Eighty years ago, he has pointed out, when only a small proportion of the adult population could read, it paid the papers to print verbatim reports of parliamentary proceedings; to-day, when all can read, it is frequently impossible to tell from a perusal of the popular Press whether Parliament is sitting or not. It is, indeed, true that universal popular education, combined with universal adult suffrage, has had results very different from those which the early enthusiasts for democracy, such as James Mill,<sup>1</sup> expected and for which the Chartists had hoped. Even Lord Bryce, who is no enemy of democracy, was constrained to remark only a few years ago that the people of England were no more interested in politics or capable of choosing their political leaders than they were in 1870.

<sup>1</sup> See quotation, Chapter I, p. 29.

*The Argument of Bernard Shaw*

The attitude of Shaw also has been no less consistent than hostile. The Fabian Society has always been careful to distinguish the brand of Socialism which it advocated from the traditional assumptions of democracy by insisting upon the necessity for the manipulation of the wandering will of the many by the expert and competent few. But the Society has, at least, given lip service to democracy. In recent years, however, Shaw's criticism of popular government has become increasingly outspoken, culminating in an uncompromising repudiation of "democracy as a delusion" which, carefully heralded by a Press controversy in which Shaw assumed the rôle of a defender of Mussolini, purports to expose the mass of fallacies and follies that are represented as having duped the liberalism of three centuries.

What are they? Government of the people is, necessary, government for the people possible; but government by the people is a patent impossibility. Why? Because, while the theory of democracy presupposes an alert, intelligent, and instructed body of citizens, the ordinary man is not, and never will become, politically alert, intelligent, or instructed. Democracy rests upon the assumption that the ordinary citizen is "a microcosm of the State," that he is born free and equal, that he has, or can be educated to have, all the wisdom which the conduct of affairs requires, and that he wishes to exercise directly, or through his chosen representatives, the various powers of government—to make laws, to control finance, defence, the police, the health services, and to administer the laws which he has made. It assumes, in fact,

as Shaw jeeringly remarks in the Preface to *Too True to Be Good*, that "by inscribing every man's name on a register of voters we could realize the ideal of every man his own Solon and his own Plato."

*Shavian Psychology.* Nothing, Mr. Shaw contends, can be further from the truth. So far from wishing to exercise his political initiative, the ordinary man, Shaw argues, "only wants to know what to do," and is always prepared to accept as an authority whoever has the courage to tell him. As with action, so with thought. Tell the ordinary man what to believe, and he will be no less grateful than if you tell him how to behave. That is why the Church and the Army have always been his two most popular institutions. In fact, says Shaw, the belief that the ordinary man wants freedom is a delusion. He is willing and anxious, as he has always been, to get his moral and political beliefs as he gets his boots and clothes, ready-made from the social shop. So intolerable does he find it to make up his own mind on moral and political questions that he is willing to regard any dogma as embodying the last word in absolute truth, and any code of morals as constituting a final and unquestioned criterion of right and wrong, if it is presented to him with a sufficiently authoritative backing. What is more, he will be prepared, if put to it, to defend the code and the dogma to the last ounce of his energy and the last drop of his blood, regarding it as the height of wickedness to act and think otherwise than in accordance with them and inflicting appalling cruelties upon all who venture to do so.

So much for the Shavian view of the plain man's psychology. What is its application to politics? The people are still in essence what Burke called them—

"the swinish multitude." They need not liberty, but discipline; they crave a leader and a master. Whoever, asks Shaw parenthetically, heard of a democratic God? It follows that the ordinary citizen tends to vote for men rather than for measures, and, having found a Man for his leader, he will follow him at all costs. If this is true of the ordinary elector, it is doubly true of the ordinary electress.

(Now a modern community requires government, and of an elaborate and expert order. Since they are themselves without initiative, and lack both political knowledge and constructive vision, ordinary people are, as we have seen, unable to govern themselves. Hence government must of necessity and in essence be dictatorial. The only difference between a dictatorship and a so-called democracy is that, while a dictator imposes himself openly by force, the democratic leader must humbug the people into believing that he governs by their consent in order that he may express their will. Hence the leaders of a democracy are dogged throughout by the obligation to deceive, and, since success in deception is one of the first qualifications of democratic leadership, a democracy tends to get bad and inefficient leaders.)

### *B. Criticism of Government in a Democracy*

At this point the argument takes a wider sweep and develops into the contemporary criticism of the personnel of democratic government. Being dependent upon the goodwill of the average man, the average politician must, it is said, appeal to the highest common factor of average interests. This highest common factor is to be found not in men's reason, but in their passions.



Measures which arouse passion provide a better foundation in popular support than those which appeal to reason, and the skill of the politician consists, therefore, in knowing which passions can be most easily aroused. Most of the really sweeping elections of recent years have been fought on issues such as Hanging the Kaiser, Making Germany Pay, the Zinovieff Letter, and the Post Office Savings Bank Scare, of which the two first were completely incapable of practical application, and the two second void of any basis in reality, as they were known to be by those who formulated them. It is on issues of this kind that politicians thrive. Hate, fear, and spite are the most potent driving-forces in large masses of people, and when they cannot be directed, as in war-time, against an external enemy they must be turned against the members of other classes or against other politicians. Thus politicians prosper by dividing the nation into rival groups and exploiting its division into rival classes, since by this means the evocation of unreasoning passions is facilitated. Hence governments, whose powers are based upon appeals to unreason, will concentrate upon whatever measures are easy to explain and which make for rivalry and division between nations or different sections of the nation. There seems to be no reason to think that there is any identity between the measures which are salutary and those which fulfil these two conditions.

### *Necessary Inadequacy of Democratic Policy*

There is, on the contrary, every reason to suppose that, as the business of government grows more technical and complex, there will be an increasing disparity between the measures which the welfare of the State

requires and those which can be made to evoke the enthusiasm of the electorate. Consider, for example, the type of measure which modern civilization demands, demands as a condition not merely of its advancement, but of its survival. The abolition of war between modern States is an obvious example. But the abolition of war involves, it is clear, the supersession of national sovereignties and the subordination of sovereign States to some form of international authority. Yet this is a measure which no popular politician dare advocate; it would offend the patriotism of the electors. The control and rationing of the world's raw materials are another. Yet the reasons for such a measure are technical, the machinery required to give it effect extremely complex, and both are wholly unadapted to popular exposition on the election platform. The assessment of an optimum population for the civilized world, and measures to ensure that no nation shall increase its population beyond the limit assigned to it, constitute another essential measure. Yet such a proposal is enormously in advance of public opinion, and any politician who advocated it would lose votes by outraging moral sentiments.

These examples will serve to illustrate the charge commonly brought against democracy, that the matters which are of vital concern to the welfare of a modern community are no longer those in regard to which it is possible to engage the interests, still less to arouse the enthusiasm, of modern electors, who have a natural preference for simple issues, such as hanging unpopular enemies, preserving their savings in the banks, and detecting Communist plots in red letters. Since democratic governments must needs win suffrages,

it follows that the issues which they will place in the forefront of their programmes are not those which are really important. It is unfortunately the case that the policy of a government when in office is still to some extent determined by the programme which it offers for the approval of the electors. To sum up with a quotation from the Preface to Shaw's *Apple Cart*: "Our solution of the political problem is Votes for Everybody and Every Authority Elected by Vote, an expedient originally devised to prevent rulers from tyrannising by the very effectual method of preventing them from doing anything. . . . As the very existence of civilization now depends on the swift and unhampered public execution of enterprises that supersede private enterprise and are not merely profitable but vitally necessary to the whole community, this purely inhibitive check on tyranny has become a stranglehold on genuine democracy."

(The charge is, then, that modern electorates are not capable of coping with the problems of a modern community, and that the governments they elect are disabled by the methods they must adopt to secure election and the limitation in the matter of personnel which the adoption of these methods imposes—it is not everybody, after all, who is prepared to win his way to power by flattering the prejudices of fools—from governing with the firmness, the skill, and the knowledge which the exigencies of the contemporary situation demand. Hence the cry for experts who, as the people cannot, if the preceding argument is valid, be expected to elect them, must impose themselves and proceed to dictate the measures for which they may be unable to obtain consent.)

*The Expert Argument Answered*

The statement of the "expert" argument has occupied considerable space. This was largely inevitable, owing to the variety of forms which the argument assumes. With the answer to it we shall be concerned more or less continuously throughout the remainder of this book. The positive answer will be given in the next Chapter; the negative one, which emerges by implication from a consideration of the alternative to democracy, in Chapter V. I content myself here with a comparatively brief reply on specific points.

*A. Scepticism as to Knowledge of Expert*

The argument contrasts the ignorance of the electors and the incompetence of those whom they elect with the knowledgeableness of the "expert." The expert, it is implied, knows what ought to be done and how to do it, when the man in the street and the Member of Parliament whom he elects do not. The implication is not justified by the facts. In regard to economic issues, which are those chiefly involved, the expert emphatically does not know, or rather, as the history of the past few years has only too plainly shown, what he "knows" is only too often diametrically opposed to what is "known" by the next expert. In a general sort of way, no doubt, economic experts are in a position to tell us what we must not do if we wish to prosper. We must not, for instance, impose tariffs and exchange restrictions if we wish to increase international trade. But the tariffs and exchange restrictions of one country are always represented as regrettable necessities which are imposed upon it by the provocative tariffs and

restrictions of its neighbours. To deal with the difficulty, international and not national action is, therefore, required; and how to persuade the nations as a whole to take the steps which the self-interest of each plainly demands is a problem no more within the competence of the economic expert than of the man in the street. (The expert, then, often does not know; his knowledge is often opposed to that of other experts while, more often still, considerations lying entirely outside the expert's province make it impossible for the government to act in accordance with his knowledge.)

### *B. Difference of Values*

Though the expert may have knowledge which the community lacks, he may also acknowledge values which the community disavows. The ends which the expert desires to promote may be, and indeed often are, different from those of the ordinary man. An economic expert, for example, concerned only with the increase of efficiency, may conceive and desire a community of industrially-minded robots, owning no desires save such as are consonant with the speeding up of production with a view to the maximizing of output; a hygienic expert, concerned only with health, may demand that men should be required to live on rice, rusks, and vegetables; a military expert that they should be drilled daily and sleep with gas masks hanging on to their bedposts in the interests of security.

Or again, though the ends of the expert may not be other than those of the community, the means that he proposes to adopt in order to secure them may be other than those which the community wills. Most men, no doubt, desire a plentitude of goods, health, and security.

It does not, however, follow that they are prepared to turn themselves into robots, vegetarians, or soldiers; and it does not follow, because they may and do acknowledge other ends with whose realization machine-minding, vegetable-eating, and drilling conflict. Thus measures proposed by an expert, although ancillary to ends which the community desires, may nevertheless be unacceptable because their adoption conflicts with other ends which the expert does not recognize.

*C. Distinction between Means and Ends Fallacious*

It is frequently contended that the expert's primary concern is with means. In a democracy, it is said, the community should will the ends, the expert determine the means for their achievement. But the considerations just mentioned suggest that within the political sphere the distinction between means and ends may break down. For means may themselves be ends in disguise. To take a concrete example: in the spring of 1931 the Labour Government set up, at the instance of the Liberals, a Committee—the May Committee on National Expenditure—to advise the Government in the matter of effecting economies. It was the Report of this Committee that precipitated the financial crisis of 1931. The report recommended, among other measures, cuts in the State expenditure on education. But to advise that this generation should save its purse by economizing on the minds of the next is not, as it at first sight appears to be, to recommend means to an end; it is to prefer one set of ends to another set. Now, where a conflict of ends, or, as I should prefer to call them, values, arises, the views of the man in the street are entitled to receive as much weight as

those of the expert; moreover, on this particular issue—the issue of education in relation to economies—the man in the street may well take a different line from the economic expert and profess himself, with Macaulay, unable to believe that “what makes a nation happier and better and wiser can ever make it poorer.” Thus the apparently innocuous doctrine, that in a democracy the community should prescribe the ends and the expert determine the means, results only too often in practice in conferring a charter upon the expert to impose upon the community in the name of means ends upon which it has had no opportunity of pronouncing judgment; and this danger, I suggest, arises because in a modern community so-called means frequently reveal themselves on examination to be not means at all, but ends masquerading as means. The conclusion is not that the expert should not be consulted and used, but that vigilance is required lest his employment should become a pretext for foisting upon the community measures which it has not willed.

D. “*Only the Wearer knows where the Shoe Pinches*”

For—and here we come to the touchstone of democracy—to govern a State efficiently, to frame and to enact good laws, is not enough. The efficiency must be such as is compatible with people’s happiness, the laws such as they wish to obey. It may be better that imperfect men should live under imperfect laws that are fitted to them, reflecting their desires and suited to their needs, than that they should seek to discipline themselves to the requirements of legislative perfection. Twentieth-century human nature is an untidy, loose, ample sort of growth, full of unacknowledged needs and

unsuspected oddities. And just as the foot which confesses to corns, owns carbuncles, and burgeons into callosities cannot without unhappiness to its owner be thrust into a perfectly shaped shoe, so a faulty angular people cannot without unhappiness be thrust into the strait-jacket of perfectly conceived laws. We must, then, cut our legislative coat according to the cloth of human nature. Hence emerges the fundamental principle of democracy, a principle which I have already invoked and to which in the following pages I shall have recourse again and again, the principle which asserts that it is only the wearer who knows where the shoe pinches; or, in the more dignified language of Roman law, embodied in a statute of Edward I, "*quod omnes tangit ab omnibus approbetur*."

The principle bears directly upon the arguments adverse to democracy which I have outlined. "The electorate is stupid, ignorant, and uninterested," say the critics; "therefore, it is not fit to govern itself. What it needs is not self-government, but leadership." But the man in the street is "interested," and of necessity, by virtue of the effects upon him of legislative enactments. He may not belong to a political party, read the political news, listen to political speeches, or trouble to cast his vote; but because what the Government decides may, and probably will, affect him profoundly, determining whether anything, and if so how much, will stand between him and starvation if he gets the sack, whether and when his body may be dismembered by a shell or disembowelled by a bullet—and by whose shell and by whose bullet—if it decides to go to war, it is right that he should be given a chance to form the State's policy by his vote and to express his



view of it when formed. He may not avail himself of the chance—that is a matter which concerns himself; but that he should be given it, however apparently “uninterested” he may appear, is an elementary requirement of political justice. And in affirming his right to help to form a policy by casting his vote, and to express his view of it when formed, we are affirming that the principles of democracy and of liberty still hold, even if all and more than all the political apathy and ignorance which Shaw, Wells, and other critics attribute to the electorate can be brought home to it.

#### E. *Virtues of Electorate*

(1) *Its Public Spirit.* But can they? It is very doubtful. (“Democratic governments,” we are told, “are time-wasting and corrupt. Their policies are determined not by considerations of desirability, but by those of popularity. Their actions are determined not by what the country needs, but by what will please the greatest number of their supporters.” Hence the common, contemporary charge that a democracy is unable to discipline itself to the performance of a distasteful task.)

In the election which succeeded the financial crisis of 1931 the policy proposed by the National Government was the reverse of popular. It included a drastic list of cuts and sacrifices which, whether rightly or wrongly, were considered to be necessary in the national interest. Whether this policy was or was not the one best adapted to the emergency is open to question; but that it was a popular policy, or that it would commend itself to those who thought only of their own private interests, few would contend. “The constitution,” declares

Mr. Simon Sarcastes in the course of his celebrated speech in Peacock's *Melincourt* against the abolition of the Rotten Boroughs, says that "no man shall be taxed but by his own consent; a very plausible theory, gentlemen, but not reducible to practice. Who will apply a lancet to his own arm, and bleed himself? Very few, you acknowledge. Who, then, *a fortiori*, would apply a lancet to his own pocket and draw off what is dearer to him than his blood—his money? Fewer still, of course; I humbly opine, none. What then remains but to appoint a royal college of state surgeons who may operate on the patient according to their views of his case? Taxation is political phlebotomy." The speech, in fact, is a cogently argued plea for government by experts, since the community will never vote to "bleed itself"; and, surprisingly, Mr. Sarcastes is, it appears, at least sometimes wrong.

(2) *Its Political Interestedness*. Nor is it the case that because people are rarely politically vocal they are not therefore politically interested. In what way, it may be asked, could people become politically vocal? They cannot, it is obvious, draft a Bill or initiate a foreign treaty; but it is not therefore to be supposed that they have no interest in legislation or foreign policy. To suggest, as Shaw seems to do, that the electorate is a single, inert, ignorant mass—that it is, in fact, still the "swinish multitude" of Burke, is to commit the fallacy of over-simplification. Every electorate contains many grades of intelligence, many degrees of public spirit. Commonly there is a large indifferent minority that neither counts nor votes. But there are also groups of politically-minded persons whose intelligence, constructive as well as critical, helps to form a

public opinion in regard to concrete issues which may influence, even if it does not mould, the policy of governments. Behind these groups is the large mass of ordinary voters, adherents of a party, whose views and sympathies are less the product of independent thinking than of traditional attachment. But this mass is never completely blind nor entirely ignorant. As education spreads, the number of those who choose their party on grounds of which they can give some account continues to grow.

Moreover, we may well ask how, on the basis of the psychology attributed to the people by democracy's critics, we are to account for the fact of democracy at all. Is representative government the result of the conscious planning of a small group of democratically-minded men? History refutes the suggestion. It is the outcome of a slow but continuous process at every crucial stage of which concessions have been wrung by the people from the reluctant hands of the holders of power. It is a process which begins with Magna Carta, advances by the recognizable stages of the Habeas Corpus Act, the Bill of Rights, the Reform Bill, and the successive granting of the demands of the Chartists, and culminates after the War in the extension of the suffrage to all adult men and women. Each of these stages represented a concession, but a concession to what? To the demand on the part of an ever-growing section of the people for a voice in their own government.

(3) *Its Care for Liberty.* As with democracy, so with liberty. Man's attitude to liberty has not been, at any rate in the past, a passive acceptance of a superfluous good. It has been rather an active demand for a political essential. Liberty is not to the people of

this country the negligible or negative thing that Shaw seems at times to suggest, but a name for that very virtue of common initiative which he denies. Democracy, admittedly, is faced by a problem, the problem of how to find such expression for this initiative of the people as will enable it to give direction to the policies which experts, no doubt, must administer. But that the initiative exists, and with it the care for liberty which it implies, the self-appointed despot of a "Corporative State," who, sharing Mussolini's eagerness to trample upon the "putrefying corpse of liberty," sought to impose an iron discipline upon the workers of Yorkshire or Lancashire, would find to his cost.

Nor in this connection is there any real evidence that it is a despot whom the people crave. 'People want to be led; accordingly they vote for men, not measures.' So Shaw. . . . Possibly, possibly not. But, if possibly, then only for the moment. No doubt a Napoleon or a Mussolini may at a critical juncture capture the imagination of the crowd. But history affords no ground for supposing that he can hold it. It is not usual for democracy to give blank cheques to tyrants.

That leadership is important nobody denies. Moreover, nobody would deny that the capacity for it is unevenly distributed, and that in every grade of society the few will assert themselves to propose and the many will passively accept their proposals. Democracy does not disdain leadership. On the contrary, it is permeated with it at every level; but this does not imply inertia on the part of the masses. Leaders in a democracy do not impose themselves by "sheer personality"; they are chosen, accepted, and followed. Nor is it enough that they should lead; they must also under-

take to "deliver the goods." In choosing leaders, in accepting their leadership, and in judging their performances, the citizens of a democracy are not inert, but active.

*Answer to Expert Argument Summarized*

(The conclusion is two-fold. First, experts are necessary. The proposition that an institution as complex as the modern State should dispense with expert advice and guidance is clearly untenable. The solution to the problem of a modern community lies not in the direction of dispensing with expert knowledge, but of increasing it. We want more experts, not fewer—more and better. But the function of the expert is in truth that of advice and guidance. He may advise, but he must not impose. He may guide, but he may not dictate. The expert, in fact, should be on tap, but not on top. Secondly, it is not to the expert, but to the ordinary citizen, that we must in the last resort look for the determination of policy. Admittedly we should not expect the ordinary citizen to have sufficient knowledge of complex political and economic issues to determine unaided what ought to be done. But we have a right to ask that he should be given such education as will enable him to judge between the proposals and recommendations of rival experts. There are many matters in regard to which the man in the street must trust the expert; but the fact need not disquiet the friends of democracy, provided that we educate him to some sense of when they are trustworthy. Aristotle remarked that it is the characteristic of an educated man to know in a general way what is and what is not possible in a particular sphere. It is precisely this sort

of education that democracy, if it is to survive, must give its citizens.<sup>1</sup> )

### III. THE MORAL ARGUMENT

#### *Regeneration and Purification in the Service of the State*

This is not easy to state shortly. It is, however, a matter of common knowledge that supporters of the dictatorships in Germany and Italy, especially when young, are imbued with an almost religious enthusiasm for their governments. Their condition is one of intense emotionalism. Reason is in abeyance and dogmatic certitude of truth is combined with complete incapacity for self-criticism. "The facts," they insist, when the facts appear to conflict with Nazi or Fascist truth—"the facts do not matter." The Nazi revolution in particular is, it is insisted, misinterpreted, if it is regarded as an economic movement; it is, rather, a spiritual revival. It embodies a nation's will to unity, and that unity, which is explicitly described as "mystic," has been achieved. In the bracing atmosphere of the Totalitarian State a man, we are assured, feels significant. He knows that he counts. With his feet planted on the bedrock of certainty he can think and work as never before. He can even work happily for half his previous pay.<sup>2</sup>

To the observer trained in the liberal tradition the dictatorships in the modern world cannot but appear wholly regressive. They seem wilfully to jettison the gains of the past; to dismiss the hard-won liberties he

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI, pp. 204-209.

<sup>2</sup> See conversations with a young Nazi in the *New Statesman and Nation*, April 21, 1934.

values as worthless relics of an outworn tradition; to forgo the hope of a rational, social life lived by free and adult human beings, and to substitute in its stead a community of regimented devotees sustained by the motive power of hysterical ardour. Yet to represent the modern dictatorships as the regimentation of a passive and servile population is an obvious mistake. They are, on the contrary, at present sustained by the active enthusiasm of large masses of the people. And the enthusiasm is in no small measure due to their ability to appeal to deep-seated human sentiments. It is the great strength of the Fascist movements that they provide men with a purpose, call them to discipline, exhort them to sacrifice. Above all, they offer them ideals. Now, emotional idealism is the characteristic mood of young men, and in Germany and Italy to-day young men have a sense of living for ideals which is absent in the youth of England and France. In the service of these ideals they enjoy a feeling of regeneration and moral purification. Excesses, no doubt, have been committed; but they are made light of. Economic hardships may have occurred; but they are cheerfully borne for the sake of the nation. Freedom may have been curtailed, but only "useless and possibly harmful freedom."<sup>1</sup> In return for its surrender the individual receives a truer and more satisfying freedom in serving the State and expressing the will of the community. It is, indeed, difficult to read the social and political literature which pours so plentifully from the presses of Germany and Italy without realizing something of the idealism with which it is inspired. It may

<sup>1</sup> The phrase is from *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, by Benito Mussolini.





Dedicating their lives to dangerous courses, men realize themselves. Lifting themselves up out of the little selfish pit of vanity and desire which is the self, they lose themselves in something which is greater than the self; devoting themselves to the service of a trusted leader, they develop the selfless elements in their nature. By these means, and not by following their desires, indulging their senses, seeking their pleasures, trusting to their own judgments upon moral questions, making up their own minds upon problems of politics and religion, men, it is said, become happy.

The line of thought is familiar, and there is no need to enlarge upon it here. When it is brought to a strategic point by the Hitlerian pledge "I promise to give every German man a job and every German woman a husband," its effect upon a young generation looking wistfully for guidance and purpose in the apparently pointless and incomprehensive post-war world may well prove irresistible.

### *Plato's Attack on Democracy*

Thirdly, there is the plea for efficiency. In the eighth and ninth books of the *Republic*, Plato draws a devastating picture of democracy as a condition of society in which everybody does everybody else's job. (In a democracy, says Plato, there is neither discipline nor function. Everybody is free to do as he likes, and in consequence everybody tries to be a statesman and meddles with public affairs. Undisciplined workers and employers squabble about wages and hours; agitators harangue and excite the people; the people prefer talking to working. As a result the community becomes a discussion shop, and amidst the clamour of so

many counsellors nothing gets done. Such is the picture of democracy which, with suitable modifications, is presented to and believed in by the enthusiastic supporters of dictatorship in the younger generation. "And," they say in effect, "we cannot, in our country's interest, let things continue in this strain any longer. The times are critical. Action is necessary—so necessary, indeed, that it must be taken and taken at once, even if the taking of it involves some suppression of that overvalued and much-abused liberty. Workmen and employers must be made to behave, politicians to stop talking and to do some honest work, agitators to stop spouting and to pull their weight for the community. A little discipline won't do anybody any harm." And the ordinary man, always ready for a change, adopts what I may venture to call the "Gawd-saking" attitude. "For Gawd's sake," he says, "let us get something done—anything, in fact, rather than nothing." And he shouts for a dictator who at least promises him action. >>

The answer to the so-called moral case for dictatorship will not be given directly. It will occupy us by implication throughout Chapter V.



## THE DEFENCE



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CASE FOR LIBERTY

#### *Introductory. Types of Liberty*

THERE are three kinds of liberty—liberty of thought, liberty of speech (which includes liberty of reading, of writing, and of discussion), and liberty of action. With liberty of action I shall not in this Chapter be concerned. Its denial is almost always a direct result of the denial of liberty of speech. It is because men say and write things which displease authority that authority incarcerates their bodies, hoping thereby to prevent their words from reaching other men's minds. Hence, if full freedom of speech, reading, writing, and discussion were granted, authority would gain little by curtailing freedom of action; only social unregenerates would be restrained, and the "political" prisoner would be unknown.

To safeguard men's liberty of speech, reading, and writing is also to safeguard, even if it be not to ensure, their liberty of thought. Although we may not, perhaps, take so optimistic a view of men's desire for intellectual freedom or their capacity to profit by it as James Mill, who believed that "all would be gained if the whole population were taught to read, if all sorts of opinions were allowed to be addressed to them by word and in writing, and if by means of a suffrage they could nominate a legislature to give effect to the

opinions they adopted," we may at least rest satisfied that, by giving men liberty of speech in the sense defined above, we are making it possible for them to think as freely as their inclinations and capacities permit.

I propose, therefore, in this Chapter, to state as briefly as I can the general principles upon which, as it seems to me, the case for liberty of speech, of discussion, of reading, and of writing rests.

### I. CLASSICAL STATEMENT OF THE CASE FOR LIBERTY

The classical statement of the case for liberty will be found in Mill's famous essay. He derives it, as he was bound to do, from his Utilitarian principles. Socrates had defended liberty on the ground that it was valuable to society; and Mill, taking Socrates's hint, bases his defence not upon any abstract right to liberty which the individual may be hypothetically supposed to possess, but upon "utility, in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being."<sup>1</sup> Two things are implied by this statement. First, it is assumed to be right and desirable that human societies should progress. Secondly, if they are to do so, liberty must be accorded to their members to propound, to receive, and to discuss any and every sort of opinion.

#### *Established Institutions and Popular Opinion*

Now, the opinions which those in authority have been chiefly concerned to suppress are those which challenge authority. The challenge of these opinions may be direct, taking the form of an open denunciation

<sup>1</sup> Essay *On Liberty*, p. 13 (Thinker's Library ed., Watts).

of government, or indirect, taking the form of a criticism of popularly received views on some matter of political, social, or religious dogma—views which authority reflects and which it exists to foster.

Established popular institutions bear a double relation to public opinion. On the one hand, they reflect and embody it; on the other, they seek to confirm and to strengthen it, thereby consolidating their own position. Thus they are at once the mirrors and the props of public opinion. They reflect it as it is, but they also help to make it that which they reflect. The murder and motherhood Press, which first forms a public appetite for murders and mothers every Sabbath day and then proceeds to cater for it on the pretext that it is only giving the public what it wants, affords a good illustration of this double relation. In this way, established institutions, whether States, Churches, schools, colleges, professional associations, or newspapers, come to have a vested interest in popularly received opinion. Having staked out a claim on the public ear, they very naturally object to any squatting on such valuable property. Anybody who ventures to question what is accepted and to offer novel opinions is, therefore, inevitably resented as an intruder. What is more, since in the enthusiasm of his reforming zeal he is apt to impart his opinions to all comers in season and out of season, thereby offering gratis a commodity for which the established institutions are accustomed to charge and by purveying which they make their livelihood, he is usually regarded as a blackleg to boot.

On what grounds, then, may the free expression of these resented opinions be not only defended but demanded?



*Mill's Statement*

Mill points out that novel opinions will be either true or false, or partly true and partly false. If they are true and authority suppresses them, authority has robbed mankind of truth. Authority usually defends itself by saying: (i) We could not tell at the time whether it was right or wrong, but it seemed to us to be wrong, and, because wrong, harmful. (ii) We are surely right to forbid the propagation of harmful opinions. (iii) Admittedly we can never be quite sure what is harmful and what is not, and it seems to be possible that in this case we may have made a mistake. But (iv) this only means that our judgment, being human, is fallible; this we admit, but the possible fallibility of our judgment is no ground for not exercising it. (v) Being in authority, we have to act, and in order to do so we must assume that our opinions, which are also the received opinions of the populace, are true. To this Mill answers: "There is the greatest difference between presuming an opinion to be true, because, with every opportunity for contesting it, it has not been refuted, and assuming its truth for the purpose of not permitting its refutation. Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right."<sup>1</sup> In other words, it is only if you allow popularly received opinions to be questioned and disputed from every point of view that you are entitled to assume them to be true. If you are not entitled to assume them to be true, you

<sup>1</sup> J. S. Mill *On Liberty*, p. 23 (Thinker's Library ed., Watts).

have no ground for suppressing the opinions which challenge them.

If the novel opinion is false, there is still no ground in public utility for its suppression. Received opinion—the fact is, alas, too obvious—is scarcely ever entirely true. But, even if it is, nobody can be sure that it is unless every opportunity has been given to those who wish to challenge it, unless this opportunity has been widely used and the resultant challenge has failed to shake it. Now truth is, no doubt, a good; but truth which is recognized to be such, which, in fact, is known to be true, is a greater good.

If, as is usually the case, the novel opinion is partly true and partly false, in which event it shares in truth with the received opinion, the received opinion, which on this assumption embodies some truth, will be found to express one aspect of it only. The novel opinion will then almost certainly stress that aspect of truth which the received opinion fails to embody. Thus one-sided popular truth will be supplemented by one-sided novel truth. In such a situation, while both partial truths may justly claim the right of popular ventilation, the novel minority opinion has a special right to be heard, since this is the one "which for the time being represents the neglected interests." The impact of one-sided Shavian truths in morals and politics upon the equally one-sided truths embodied in the imposing edifice of late Victorian religious orthodoxy, moral prudery, and economic individualism affords a good example of this last case.

### *Argument Restated in Terms of Values*

With the substance of Mill's argument I can find no fault. Nevertheless, I feel that the form in which Mill has chosen to state it is in some respects alien from

contemporary modes of thought. Let me, then, endeavour to restate it in more modern terms. Mill's argument presupposes that the discovery of truth is a good, and that the more truth the opinions of a community embody the better. He then proceeds to point out with great force how the suppression of opinion impedes the discovery and acceptance of truth.

But let us suppose that somebody denies this premise—that he urges, as the Nazis urge in Germany to-day, that truth is not always to be desired,<sup>1</sup> that too much truth, especially if it happens to be discovered by Jews<sup>2</sup> or professed by Socialists, may be bad for a community, and that it is, therefore, frequently necessary in the interests of the State—that is, of the

<sup>1</sup> Consider, for example, the following:—

(i) The pronouncement, which I have already had occasion to quote, from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, that it is the duty of Germans "not to seek out objective truth, in so far as it may be favourable to others, but uninterruptedly to serve one's own truth."

(ii) "National Socialism consciously turns away from education that has knowledge as its last end." (Extract from Decree of Prussian Government, March 1934.)

(iii) The effort of educationists must be "to produce the man political who in all thoughts and actions is rooted in his nation and inseparably attached to its history and faith. Objective truth is secondary, and not always to be desired." (Dr. Frick, German Minister of the Interior.)

(iv) "I expect from the teachers that they give to their pupils the fundamental principles of the philosophy and the idea of National Socialism. . . . Not to remain neutral and objective in the school, not to make the child into a cold observer, but to awaken in him enthusiasm and passion. It is a question of eternal and divine values and not one of cold reality." (Herr Rust, Prussian Minister of Education.)

(v) Hitler's Manifesto published in July 1932 against the "bloody objectivity of Herr von Papen" and his fellow judges because of their condemnation of the Beuthen murderers.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. the account current in Nazi Germany of the origin of the "Theory of Relativity"—viz., that Einstein found it in a notebook in the pocket of a dead Prussian (Nordic) officer.

Nazi Party—to suppress some truths and to tamper with others, maintaining, for example, that Christ was not a Jew,<sup>1</sup> or that God is specially partial to Nordics, or that non-Nordics are not human beings,<sup>2</sup> that the Japanese are Aryans,<sup>3</sup> or that Germany really won the War, or, alternatively, that she only lost the War because of the betrayal of Nordics by “Marxist traitors.”

In the face of such a denial the only reply seems to

<sup>1</sup> Or, as is currently maintained by the German Christians, “A Jew only on His mother’s side.”

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, *Neue Grundlagen der Rassenforschung*, by Dr. Gauch, one of the standard works on the subject of *Rassenkunde* (race study), from which I select a couple of passages:—“We are thus able to establish the following principle: there exists no physical or psychological characteristic that would justify a differentiation of mankind from the animal world. The only differences that exist are between Nordic man, on the one hand, and animals in general, including non-Nordic men or sub-men (who are a transition species) on the other” (p. 79). “Generally speaking, the Nordic race alone can emit sounds of untroubled clearness, whereas among non-Nordic men and races the pronunciation is impurer, the individual sounds are more confused and more like the noises made by animals, such as barking, snoring, sniffing, squeaking. . . . That birds can learn to talk better than other animals is explained by the fact that their mouths are Nordic in structure—that is to say, high, narrow, and short-tongued. . . . The shape of the Nordic gum allows a superior movement of the tongue, which is the reason why Nordic talking and singing are fuller” (p. 165). If non-Nordics are more closely allied to monkeys and apes than to Nordics, why (the question is inescapable) is it possible for them to mate with Nordics and not with apes? Dr. Gauch does not escape it; his answer is impressive: “It has not been proved,” he writes, “that non-Nordics cannot mate with apes.”

<sup>3</sup> “A professor of ethnography, belonging to one of the most distinguished German universities, received instructions to teach his class that the Japanese were Aryans. These instructions he smilingly disregarded. More peremptory orders came. After his third refusal to preach the new doctrine he was warned by friends that he was about to be put in prison. Professor X. then left the country and is now living in Switzerland.” (Letter to *The Times* from Elizabeth Bibesco, May 11, 1934.)

be that truth is an ultimate value, intuitively perceived to be such. That men do, in fact, value it, the pursuit of accurate scholarship in history and literature, the existence of disinterested research in science, are sufficient testimony. Many, indeed, have believed that in the increase of man's rationality—that is to say, in the increase of man's desire for truth and in his ability to receive and embrace it when it is presented to him—lies the chief hope of our species. But, if I am asked why men should value truth or why its discovery and increase ought to be promoted, I do not know what answer to give.

### *Ultimate Values Defined*

This confession of ignorance is not intended as an avowal of undue humility, for I do not believe that others could answer the question any better than I can, and it is precisely because they cannot that I call truth an ultimate value. That such values exist, that there are, in other words, things which men pursue and desire for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else, seems to me to be a plain fact of human experience. Yet the very circumstance that they *are* pursued for their own sakes makes it impossible to give reasons why they should be pursued, since any such reasons would necessarily have to take the form of specifying something else *for the sake of which* they are being pursued; and if they are, in fact, pursued for their own sakes, there is no such something else. That this is so may be seen from considering some common valuation of the sort men make in daily life. Let us suppose, for example, that I have a cold, and that somebody tells me that quinine is "good" for it. I then desire quinine. Why? Because I

want to cure the cold. Why again? Because having a cold is unpleasant and unhealthy. Why not be unhealthy? Because health is preferable to disease. Why is it preferable? At this point I may stop further questions by simply asserting that I know it to be so; that is, I see health to be desirable for its own sake. Or I may answer, because health brings happiness and I desire happiness. Why desire happiness? Again I may say because I know it to be desirable for its own sake, in which case happiness becomes an ultimate value, or because I desire happiness for the sake of something else, in which case the "something else" becomes an ultimate value. Ultimate values, then, are those which are desired for their own sakes and for the sake of which all other things are desired. Moreover, the fact that they are so desired makes it impossible for us to give reasons *why* they should be desired.

### *Truth and Liberty*

Now, there is a general consensus of opinion to the effect that the things which are ultimately valuable in the sense defined are Beauty, Truth, Goodness, and Happiness. If, as I believe, we may measure the progress of a society by the extent to which it embodies in its institutions and in the lives of its members these ultimate values, we may give a new meaning to Mill's assertion that the case for liberty, regarded, as liberty must be regarded, as an indispensable condition for the discovery and promotion of truth, is "grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being."

I have re-phrased Mill's main argument in this way, invoking Truth as an absolute value whose promotion is good in itself without justification or qualification,

because it seems to me that freedom may itself be such a value. It seems to me, in fact, that freedom may be something that men also desire for its own sake. It is not, in other words, only in order that we may say this or do that that we desire freedom; we desire it for itself, irrespective of any use to which we may put it.

But if freedom is an ultimate value, its value is negative rather than positive in the sense that men normally desire it only in its absence. We positively enjoy Beauty when it is presented to us embodied in nature, stone, or sound; but we cannot actually be said positively to enjoy freedom except when it is restored to us after deprivation. In this sense, freedom is like health or air. We normally value health only when we have lost it, or, having lost it, have just regained it, while the memory of illness is still vividly with us. Similarly with air; we value it only if it is taken from us, when we value it so much that we proceed to die unless it is restored to us. So men normally value liberty only when it is denied to them. But its denial is a denial of all that makes life worth living, so that the spirit of the prisoner cries out for liberty and again for liberty, as the lungs of the man who is choking cry out for air. Liberty, indeed, is the air of the spirit.

If I am right in thinking that liberty is itself an ultimate value, desired for its own sake and not for the sake of that for which it may be used, no further arguments on its behalf are strictly necessary. Ultimate values are not only desired, but, desiring them, we intuitively recognise that they ought to be promoted; and so it is with liberty. There are, however, various subsidiary arguments which ought to be added, if only because of their immediate relevance to the present situation.

## II. THE GENIUS AND THE COMMUNITY

It may, I think, be regarded as an established fact that the advance of the mind of the race is primarily due to the insight of individuals. Original creation in art, original thinking in morals or politics, original research in science, are the products not of masses of men organized in communities, but of the minds of single men and women. Now, the circumstance of the thought of the pioneering few being new and original is bound to make it appear shocking and subversive to the conventional many. Inevitably it challenges vested interests in the thought of the present, unsettling men's minds, alarming their morals, and undermining the security of the powerful and the established. Hence the original genius is only too often abused as an outrageous and often as a blasphemous impostor. Heterodoxy in art is at worst rated as eccentricity or folly, but heterodoxy in politics or morals is denounced as propagandist wickedness, which, if tolerantly received, will undermine the very foundations of society; while the advance on current morality, in which the heterodoxy normally consists, is achieved only in the teeth of vested interests in the thought and morals it seeks to displace. Thus, while the genius in the sphere of art is usually permitted to starve in a garret, the genius in the sphere of conduct is persecuted and killed with the sanction of the law. An examination of the great legal trials of history from this point of view would make interesting reading. Socrates, Giordano Bruno, and Servetus were all tried and condemned for holding opinions distasteful to persons in authority in their own day, for which the world now honours them. One of the best definitions of genius is the man who, in Shelley's



words, " beholds the future in the present, and his thoughts are the germ of the flower and fruit of latest time." To put the point biologically, the genius is an evolutionary " sport " on the mental and spiritual plane designed to give conscious expression to life's instinctive purpose. He represents, therefore, a new thrust forward on the part of life and destroys the prevailing level of thought and morals only to prepare for a new one. The thought of the community as a whole presently moves up to the level from which the genius first proclaimed his disintegratingly original message, and we have the familiar historical spectacle of the heterodoxies of one age becoming the platitudes of the next.

Inevitably we hear only of the geniuses who " break through " and stamp their thought upon the minds of men. But for every one who, in spite of opposition, succeeds in bringing his original inspiration home to the mind of the race, there may have been, there probably have been, a dozen whom opposition has succeeded in stifling. The case, then, for giving liberty to the individual to speak his mind, whatever it may be, is simply the case for not blocking the channels along which alone those intimations can reach the mind of man whose embodiment in concrete form, whether in paint or sound, in moral codes or political institutions, constitutes, in the only real sense of the word, his progress. Here, then, is a further meaning for Mill's phrase in defence of liberty as " grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being."

### *The Genius and the Echo*

In opposition to the arguments just stated the following considerations are sometimes adduced.

A. It is objected first that, while the argument

supports the claim to liberty of original genius, original genius is, after all, extremely rare. Most of us merely echo the thoughts of others, and we may think ourselves lucky if we succeed in introducing even the smallest note of personality into what we echo. For the most part what is called originality is merely skill in concealing origins. This being so, the risk of depriving mankind of new truth by curtailing, in the interests of order or the safety of the State, the licence of opinion claimed by ordinary men is small indeed.

This objection has no real substance. Against it we may urge (i) that it is frequently impossible to determine at the time whether the purveyor of ideas is merely the echo of his times or the herald of new ones. It is, therefore, desirable to give him the benefit of the doubt, in case he may turn out to be the latter. Moreover, it is not necessary for a man to be an original genius for his claim to liberty of utterance to be justified. If he is a thinker whose ideas are ever so slightly in advance of the majority of his contemporaries, the importance to Society of his thinking is so great that the arguments against suppression still hold, although no doubt with diminished force. And even if he be no original at all, but a mere echo of other men, Society cannot afford to inhibit the full development of the personalities of its citizens by forbidding the echo.

### *The Importance of a Free Atmosphere*

(ii) That the most favourable condition for the development of original genius is afforded by an environment of alert and independent thought, which is, perhaps, all the more unsparingly critical just because it is not itself original. Most of the world's best work in science, in the arts, or in the realm of pure thought,

is in this sense the outcome of co-operative effort. The epoch-making discoveries in science, no less than the great works of creative imagination, are for the most part the products, not of geniuses working in the wilderness, but of a body of workers between whom constant interchange of ideas and reciprocal criticism of results ensure the maintenance of a respectably high level of achievement. When a number are doing good work the chances are that one or two will do great work. The Brandenburg Concertos no less than the Quantum Theory are in this sense the products not only of Bach and Planck, but of the environment of competent musicians and physicists in which their authors worked.

Such an environment is no less essential in the sphere of moral, political, and social thought than it is in that of the arts. To suppress men's freedom to criticize whom and what they please is, therefore, to proscribe the conditions which foster the production of all that is new in science, of all that is great in art, of all that is boldly, even alarmingly original, in thought. It is to substitute for the keen and bracing air of criticism the hothouse atmosphere of flattery and subservience.

### *Intellectual Activity itself a Good*

(iii) That intellectual activity is itself a good and ought not to be cramped. 'Wherein,' asked Aristotle, 'does man chiefly differ from the animals?' and answered, 'In respect of his possession of the faculty of reason.' The best life for any organism, he further suggested, consists in the exercise of its distinctive faculties or talents at their highest pitch of development upon an appropriate subject matter. We get our greatest happiness, in fact, from doing what we can do best and what we alone can do. This, no doubt, is a

counsel of perfection ; but the advice to cultivate that aspect of our being which most distinguishes not only our species from others, but ourselves from other members of our species, is sound and should be followed. Now, intellectual activity is natural to our species, and a man will derive that satisfaction which comes from the free development of his highest faculties in its exercise. In so far as his mind possesses an original twist, which distinguishes it, albeit ever so little, from that of his fellows, this satisfaction will be heightened by the expression of the twist. A satirist like Swift will fulfil his nature by writing ; but he will not fulfil it to the limits of his and its capacity unless he writes satire, thereby giving expression to that original angle of vision which, in distinguishing him from his contemporaries, makes him distinctively himself. There is, then, a case for the free exercise of reason and its free expression in speech, writing, and discussion, simply because to reason, to speak, to write, and to discuss are natural human propensities, in the exercise of which men express their natures. To forbid men to express their natures is to forbid them to realize all that they have it in them to be ; it is, in a word, to forbid them to be themselves.

*The Genius as Lunatic and as the Goad of the State*

B. It is objected, in the second place, that thought which may appear to be "in advance of" often turns out to be merely "at variance with," and that it is frequently impossible at the time to distinguish the expression of original inspiration from the outpourings of irresponsible abnormality. We have to reckon with the facts not only that

"Great wit is sure to madness near allied  
And thin partitions do their bounds divide,"

but also that most geniuses have been at least in part mad. And the answer is that original truth is at once so rare and so difficult to come by that it is essential to give doubtful cases the benefit of the doubt. "They who tamper with veracity from whatever motive are tampering with the vital force of human progress," wrote Viscount Morley. But it is not necessary that a doctrine's veracity should be established at the time of its promulgation. It is sufficient that it should have a chance of being true to render its author's freedom of utterance inviolable. It is precisely this difficulty of determining at the time whether an apparently novel utterance has value or not, and the consequent risk entailed by its suppression, that led Mill to his famous conclusion that "if all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."<sup>1</sup>

C. Thirdly, it is pointed out—although this is not so much an objection as an apology, an apology which seeks to excuse authority for its suppression of liberty by dwelling upon the strength of the temptation to which authority is exposed—that the original thinker often directly challenges the very government whose forbearance is the condition of his utterance. The State tends to embody the wisdom of the average man, its institutions to be clogged with the superstitions of the past. Inevitably those in whom new wisdom is germinating cannot but find themselves in greater or less degree at variance with established authority. Hence it is the function of those who, though not themselves the channels of original thought, are alert for its

<sup>1</sup> *Essay On Liberty*, pp. 19-20 (Thinker's Library ed., Watts).

recognition and alive to its value, to ensure that the force of authority is not used to suppress the goad that discomfits it. In carrying out this function it is their duty, in the words of the Preface to Shaw's so-called Fascist play, *On the Rocks*, to secure "impunity not only for propositions which, however novel, seem interesting, statesmanlike, and respectable, but for propositions that shock the uncritical as obscene, seditious, blasphemous, heretical, and revolutionary." In the performance of this duty Shaw, the persistent critic of privilege and injustice, the Quixotic tilter against the censorship, has played a part second to none of those of his contemporaries who now denounce him for his betrayal of liberal ideas.

### III. THE STATE AND THE INDIVIDUAL

A further argument for liberty may be derived from a consideration of the purpose of the State and of its relation to its members. This is not the place for a dissertation on the vexed philosophical question of the nature and function of the State, a subject upon which I hope to say something in a final Chapter.<sup>1</sup> I shall content myself here, therefore, with dogmatically announcing what seem to me to be the only conclusions which it is possible for persons not bemused with philosophical dialectic to reach, leaving those who are interested to tackle the somewhat formidable volumes on political theory in which they are discussed.<sup>2</sup> The State is not an end in itself; it exists to promote ends beyond itself—namely, the well-being of its members.

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI, pp. 176-184.

<sup>2</sup> The reasons for the particular conclusions here stated will be found in an essay entitled "Common Sense and the Theory of the State" in my *Essays in Common Sense Philosophy* (Allen and Unwin).

So much the Greeks asserted, and the assertion seems to me never to have been successfully challenged.<sup>1</sup> But, whereas Plato and Aristotle tended to hold that there was one good life for all or at any rate for the great mass of individuals, which it was the business of the State to promote, we are inclined (and I think rightly) to postulate a number of different kinds of good life appropriate to different kinds of individuals. If modern liberal thought is right in taking this view, it is essential that the individual should be allowed freely to choose for himself the kind of good life in pursuit of which his nature will find its appropriate fulfilment. Such a choice cannot, it is obvious, be made for him. Individual spontaneity in such matters is essential. Liberty, then, is an indispensable prerequisite not only for the full development of individual personality, but for the discovery by the individual of those ends of value in the pursuit of which alone his personality can reach its full development. *It is, in other words, the indispensable condition of his realization of all that he has it in him to be.* For the State to cramp this liberty is to inhibit the development of its citizens, and to debar them from the pursuit of what seems to them to be good; in so inhibiting and debarring its citizens it negates the very principle in terms of which alone its existence can be justified.

<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, challenged, especially by modern Fascist writers. Consider, for example, the following from *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, by Benito Mussolini: "The principle that society exists solely through the well-being and the personal liberty of all the individuals of which it is composed does not appear to be conformable to the plans of nature."

## IV. THE LIMITS OF LIBERTY

Does it, then, follow that there are no bounds which Society is justified in imposing upon individual liberty? I think that it does not. On the assumption that the function and *rationale* of the State are to make possible the pursuit of the good life for its members, Mill was surely right in declaring that "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number is self-protection."<sup>1</sup> They are entitled in the last resort to protect themselves by force, and the inevitable result of the use of force is the curtailment of somebody's liberty. The question inevitably arises, whose liberty may be thus justifiably curtailed, and in what circumstances?

It is, I should hold, the case that every society contains a number of anti-social individuals who do, in fact, obey its laws unwillingly. Now evil is parasitic upon good, in the sense that it is only worth while for some people to do wrong because most people do right. Thus the burglar is parasitic upon the householder, since if all were burglars there would be no goods to burgle. It is the many honest men who make dishonesty profitable, just as it is the many truthful men who make lying fruitful, since if all men were dishonest there would be no prizes to be gained by dishonesty, while if all told lies nobody would believe anybody else and lying would lose its point. Since it is the existence of law-abiding citizens that calls into being the law-breaking thug, it is clearly the business of the citizen to restrain the thug. The philosopher cannot philosophize while his neighbour is abducting

<sup>1</sup> *Essay On Liberty*, p. 11 (Thinker's Library ed., Watts).



his wife, nor can the artist paint while the burglar is running off with his canvases. In this sense all civilized activity is dependent upon a minimum background of ordered security, and the maintenance of this background is a condition of its continuance. The presence of force, in other words, is required in Society not against the normal, social citizen, but against the exceptional anti-social citizen whom the activities of the normal citizen call into existence, that he may be restrained from rendering those activities impossible. The function of the State in this connection is, therefore, to maintain that minimum standard of behaviour on the part of all which is the indispensable condition of the pursuit of the good life on the part of any. With this object, and with this alone, it is entitled, by means of the law backed by force, to curtail a liberty whose exercise would threaten the very purpose for which the State exists and by the standard of its furtherance of which its activities can alone be justified. But to concede that Society is justified in confining the social offender is very different from admitting its right to suppress the social thinker. A prison may appropriately be used to reform, if not to deter, the criminal; but it is only by abuse of authority that it is employed to silence the critic of the government.

### *Where Uniformity is Necessary*

One subsidiary matter which must be mentioned is Society's justification for limiting eccentricity of behaviour. The right to be odd in one's own way is justly cherished by Englishmen, and, as I have tried to show, Society loses by suppressing its eccentrics. Nevertheless, there are certain spheres in which, while it is a matter of indifference what people do, it is essential

that they should all do the same thing. There is no reason in ethics why the traffic should go either to the right of the road or to the left; but, if it has been decided that it shall go to the right, nobody can be allowed to imperil the lives of his fellow citizens by insisting that the full and free development of his personality will be inhibited, unless he fulfils it by going to the left. Similarly, the question whether people should wear clothes or not seems to be one for decision not on moral principles, but by climatic considerations. What is important is that, if the climate is such as to demand clothes, nobody should be allowed to outrage people's resultant sense of moral decency by going naked, any more than he should be permitted to embarrass the feelings of a naked society by covering his body with clothes.<sup>1</sup> I conclude that in matters where uniformity is essential Society has a right to exact uniform behaviour from its citizens. Its function is, to quote again from the Preface to *On the Rocks*, to "inculcate standard behaviours throughout that vast field of civilized conduct in which it does not in the least matter how people act in particular situations provided they all act in the same way."

This reinforces the conclusion already reached. While it is not the business of the State to promote the good life, it may justifiably enforce that minimum of uniform behaviour on the part of all without which it is not possible for the good life to be lived by any.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. the Report of the Resident Commissioner of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony in the South Pacific: "European clothes have been used in the Colony for a quarter of a century. The dirtiness of the garments worn by women and infants in arms is often horrible and indescribable. Sex morality in the past was high, but since the introduction of clothes there has been a notable deterioration."

The space for the above digression—a digression on the purposes for which and the principles upon which liberty may be curtailed—can ill be spared in a book whose concern is to defend it. I return, therefore, to the defence.

#### V. RESUMPTION OF THE DEFENCE. THE FRAILTY OF MAN

The arguments summarized above constitute what may be termed the positive case for liberty. But there is a further argument, not less strong than the preceding, and never stronger than at the present time, which is negative. This is the argument from the frailty of human nature.

##### A. *His Errors in Thought*

It is frequently adduced as a ground for prohibiting the expression of a particular set of ideas that the doctrine they embody is false. This presupposes that the received opinion which the doctrine questions is true. Yet this is very rarely the case. Most human beliefs on almost all subjects have been false, and many have been demonstrably false. Most systems of metaphysics are forms of cosmic lying; most scientific theories have been disproved, and systems of theology are by their very nature such that, if one of them is true, all the rest of them must be untrue. "No future education authority, unless," as Shaw acidly remarks in the Preface to *On the Rocks*, "it is as badly educated as our present ones, will imagine that it has any final and eternal truths to inculcate." If the occasions on which human thought has been true are rare, those on which it has been known to be true are rarer. In fact, from the very nature of the case, most of the doctrines in the

interests of which men have imprisoned, silenced, and persecuted other men, such as the Virgin Birth or the Divine Right of Kings, are incapable of verification, at least in this world. If they are ever to be verified, they must wait until mankind reaches the next.

From this characteristic of falsity which has attached to the majority of men's beliefs in the past it seems unlikely that the beliefs of our contemporaries are wholly exempt. In a famous passage on the need for scepticism Bertrand Russell divides beliefs into those held by experts and those held by non-experts. After pointing out that even the belief of experts does not make an opinion certain, he ventures the view that it is, nevertheless, more likely to be right than that of non-experts. He then proceeds to enunciate the following three propositions as embodying the basis of a reasonable scepticism :—

“(1) That when the experts are agreed, the opposite opinion cannot be held to be certain; (2) that when they are not agreed, no opinion can be regarded as certain by a non-expert; and (3) that when they all hold that no sufficient grounds for a positive opinion exist, the ordinary man would do well to suspend his judgment. These propositions,” Bertrand Russell continues, “may seem mild, yet, if accepted, they would absolutely revolutionize human life.”<sup>1</sup>

### *The Case for Toleration*

What conclusions are we entitled to draw? The case for the suppression of liberty, in so far as it rests upon the assumption that some received opinion is true and ought not, therefore, to be challenged, is undermined. Broadly speaking, there are no such opinions. Hence

<sup>1</sup> *Sceptical Essays*, pp. 12, 13.

the argument from human error leads necessarily to the case for toleration, for, where no view can be known to be true, we have, it is obvious, no ground for refusing a hearing to any.

The case for toleration is, nevertheless, founded in the last resort upon belief in human rationality—upon the belief, that is to say, that men are so constituted that they will in the end embrace truth if they are only given a reasonable chance of perceiving it.<sup>1</sup> Reason may, of course, and often does, make mistakes; it may be biased by prejudice, distorted by desire, warped by unconscious wishes. Nevertheless, although it is a faulty and imperfect instrument, it is the only one at our disposal. Though it has rarely permitted itself to be determined by the weight of evidence alone, it can be so determined; though it may rarely have arrived at true beliefs, it can arrive at them. Thus the claim that men should be given the right to proclaim and the chance to listen to all doctrines owns a double ground: a ground in the belief in human rationality and a ground in the fact of human error. It embodies a belief in man's ability to grasp true doctrines, if they are made available, and a scepticism as to the actual truth of most of those that have been available.

### *Faith in Reason*

The belief in human rationality is perhaps the most distinctive feature of European culture, as the development of reason is its greatest achievement. The gift of reasoning is, indeed, Europe's supreme gift to man-

<sup>1</sup> This, the conviction of the Mills and of all "liberals" (see quotation Chapter I, p. 29), can here only be registered, not defended. I have suggested grounds for it in my *Guide to Modern Thought*, Chapter VIII, and dealt with it more fully in *Philosophical Essays* (to be published in the autumn of 1934), Essays IV and V.

kind. It was in ancient Greece that reason first came into its own and produced its characteristic form of civilization, democracy. The inhabitants of the Greek City States were the first human beings to emancipate themselves from the rule of autocrats. The status of their predecessors had been that of children, subjects of a severe or benevolent "father," either king or priest. The Greeks were the first independent, adult men or women relying on their reasons to direct their destinies and to manage their affairs, either directly in a democratic assembly of all the citizens or indirectly through their chosen representatives.

Reason having once asserted itself in the European mind, no reaction has been successful in crushing it for long. After the age of faith came the return to Classicism, that is to rationalism, in the Renaissance. The Renaissance inaugurated an intensive development of the intellect which culminated in Voltaire. Voltaire represents the purely European or intellectual type of mind at its highest; he is the utilitarian rationalist *par excellence*; tolerance and freedom are his watchwords, hatred of cruelty and injustice his inspiration. It was the spirit of Voltaire that destroyed the Absolutism of the eighteenth century. After the Absolutist Governments came the French Revolution; after the Fascist dictatorships of the twentieth century will come—we cannot as yet tell what. Yet, if history be any guide and a colloquialism may be pardoned, reason may be expected to stage her accustomed "come-back." And, with reason, tolerance; for the counterpart of rational activity in oneself is the toleration of rational activity in others. It is no accident that the belief in human rationality should have historically been invoked as the basis of tolerance, from the time of

Gamaliel rebuking the Council for wishing to silence Peter—"Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God"—to that of John Stuart Mill, telling us in his *Autobiography* that what he and his friends "principally thought of was to alter other people's opinions; to make them believe according to evidence . . . which, when they knew, they would, we thought, by the instrument of opinion, enforce a regard to it upon one another." Nor, unless we are completely to despair of the rationality of our species, can we refuse to share the belief? Sharing it, we shall demand complete toleration for the expression of any and every doctrine under the sun, even—and here is the acid test of our belief in toleration—of those doctrines which would forbid the expression of any except themselves. We must, in a word, be tolerant even of those views which deny tolerance.

The conclusion is particularly relative at the moment when a large proportion of the opinions publicly advocated envisage a form of government under which free speech would be abolished. In Fascist and Communist countries criticism of the existing régime is not permitted, the Governments apparently feeling too ashamed of themselves to permit their peoples to speak their minds on their records. In this country the establishment of a Fascist régime would probably have similar results.<sup>1</sup> It is unfortu-

<sup>1</sup> "Fascists will welcome criticism. They will encourage people to give their opinion. All that will be required is that criticism is founded upon fact, and that the opinion expressed shall be at least reasonably expert. . . ." "We shall make the reasonable conditions that the speaker shall know what he is talking about, and his hearer shall be in a position to

nately a fact that most of the doctrines which seek to sway and frequently do sway the minds of contemporary men, especially of young men, are anti-libertarian, demanding the suppression of that very right of criticism upon which at the moment they thrive. Can the friends of liberty advocate the suppression of those who preach these doctrines? Clearly they cannot. Those who believe in freedom may not deny men the right to advocate unfreedom. We cannot in the name of a principle take action which denies the principle. Hence those of us who care for liberty must forgo the use of the weapon upon which its opponents pride themselves.

### *B. His Mistaken Enthusiasms*

Not only is it the case that men believe propositions which there is no reason to think true; they tend to embrace them with a fervour which is inversely proportional to their truth. Where the truth is known, nobody displays any enthusiasm on its behalf. Where it is, and in the nature of the case must remain, unknown, men hasten to supply the place of knowledge by converting their conjectures into dogmas, and then proceed to persecute whoever refuses to share the dogmas. Thus for the probably true belief that 7 times 7 makes 49 nobody, so far as I am aware, has been anxious to make the world uncomfortable for anybody. But on behalf of the dogmas announced by States and Religions, of which none could be known to be true and the truth of any one of which would have involved the falsity of all the rest, they have fought with prodigious energy and died with invariable enthusiasm. Most

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understand and benefit by his speech." From an article "Free Speech under Fascism" printed in *The Fascist Week*, January 5-11, 1934. Comment seems needless.



men have a need to believe; they like to be told what to think and what to do. That is why the Church and the Army have always been their two most popular institutions. But, if they are to derive the full benefits from belief, it is necessary that the propositions believed in should be simple, intelligible, and presented with an authoritative backing. Granted that these conditions are satisfied, men will defend their beliefs to the last ounce of their energy and the last drop of their blood, regarding it as the height of wickedness to act otherwise than in accordance with them and inflicting appalling cruelties on all who venture to do so. That the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, or that he proceeds from the Father only; that Christ's nature was composite or that it was simple; that bread and wine are or are not body and blood, or that in some mysterious sense they both are and are not at the same time; that during a period of four years and three and a half months Germans were wicked and Englishmen virtuous, or alternatively that Englishmen were wicked and Germans virtuous, are propositions in defence of which men have killed one another in thousands. Yet it is difficult to be sure that any one of these propositions is quite true and highly probable that most of them are untrue. Looking back over the history of human enthusiasm evoked on behalf of error, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the best guarantee of the falsehood of a belief is that large numbers of human beings should be found to hold it with passionate intensity. To give these facile enthusiasms the power of silencing those who venture to oppose them is to give error a charter for the silencing of truth. It is just because men cleave with such perfervid eagerness to whatever beliefs promise to

console their spirits or to gratify their pride that we must be doubly anxious in the interests of truth to obtain a fair hearing for the expression of heterodoxy, protest, and dissent.

### *C. His Abuse of Power*

This is notorious and flagrant, so notorious and flagrant that, if history is to be trusted, there is no more subtle corrupter of human character than the possession of irresponsible power. The careers of Nero and Caligula in Ancient Rome, of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great in Russia, of Kings John and Richard II in our own country, to take but a few names, where history records a hundred, bear witness to the fact that men whose position raises them above human station fall in character below it. To give men the power of gods is, in fact, to afford a reasonable presumption that they will behave like beasts.

But it is not necessary to be a king to bear witness to the appalling effects which the possession of power has upon human beings. Every slave-owner who has beaten and starved his slaves, every mill-owner who has over-worked and under-paid his employees, every charity school or workhouse master who has bullied and starved the wretches whom indigence has placed in his power, illustrates the same truth. Squeers and Bumble, Mr. Murdstone and Mr. Brocklehurst, have their counterparts by the thousand, and the sum of human misery which has resulted from their exercise of power is past telling. "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely," said Lord Acton. He was surveying men's record in the past. Yet there is no reason to suppose that it is different in the present, or that the same causes are failing to produce the same

results merely because they happen to operate in the twentieth century.

Nor is it necessary for the holder of power to be evilly disposed; he need not be, even unconsciously, a Sadist to make those who are subject to him miserable. On the contrary, he may be filled with the best intentions. He may be a moral reformer anxious to make men good in this world, or a religious enthusiast intent on saving their souls in the next. He may believe in what is essentially harmless—in temperance, for example, or vegetarianism, or the virtues of wholemeal bread. Yet his possession of power will transform his personally harmless belief into a public menace. He will misjudge men's desires, misunderstand their purposes, flout their wishes. He will make what he believes to be the best possible laws and hold up his hands in horror at men's ingratitude in protesting against them. In a word, with the best intentions in the world, he will make men miserable simply because he cannot put himself in their place.

"It is only the wearer who knows where the shoe pinches." The remark I have already insisted embodies a final truth, the truth which is the foundation of democracy. We must not give men irresponsible power, not only because it corrupts them and they abuse it, but also because they cannot experience the effects of their use of it. They do not, in fact, have to live under the laws they make. It follows, first, that in the last resort only those must make the laws who have to obey them; secondly, that those who have to obey them should have the chance of getting them altered through their right of public criticism and the ventilation of grievances. The first is the principle of democracy, the second of liberty.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ALTERNATIVE TO LIBERTY

"The body of liberty is dead and her corpse already putrescent."—MUSSOLINI.

#### *Introductory*

IN the last Chapter I attempted to outline the general principles on which the case for liberty rests. In this one I shall examine the results of the neglect of these principles. Since in the modern State dictatorship is at once the enemy of and the alternative to liberty, this examination will involve a consideration of the nature of dictatorship. It will be convenient to consider the effects of the denial of liberty from the point of view, first of the State, second of the individual, and third of the community. What, first, are the characteristics of the governments which deny it? What, second, are the effects of such denial upon the individuals to whom liberty is denied? What, third, is the general nature of the communities which are governed by dictators? If I am successful in showing that the effects of the denial of liberty upon governments, upon individuals, and upon communities are in the main evil, I shall indirectly have answered the so-called moral case for dictatorship which was summarized at the end of Chapter III.

#### I. CHARACTERISTICS OF DICTATORSHIP GOVERNMENTS

##### *Deterioration of Government*

¶It has frequently been observed that governments of all kinds get worse as they grow older. Starting with

high hopes, they end amid universal disappointment; animated at first by disinterested motives, their members are seen in the last resort to cling to office for no other reason than their desire for the continued enjoyment of its sweets. While this gradual deterioration is to some extent a characteristic of all governments, in none is it more marked than in dictatorial ones. Dictatorships may begin—they sometimes have begun—in an atmosphere of moral revival. There is simplicity in high places, and a strong sense of moral purpose; duties are punctiliously attended to, public affairs efficiently transacted, corruption is interdicted, venality is punished. They end in an orgy of corruption and a reign of terror under which the most violent methods of crude repression are employed in order to intimidate their discontented and miserable peoples. }

For this change the corrupting effects of power upon the frailty of human nature, to which I drew attention at the end of the last Chapter, are no doubt in part responsible. There is, however, another reason, a reason inherent in the nature of non-democratic government, to which Professor Ferrero, in the Preface to his study of the world's greatest dictator, Julius Cæsar, has drawn attention. This is so germane to my present theme that I must plead indulgence for summarizing the main drift of his argument.

### *Inability of Dictatorship to Cry Halt*

A dictatorship, being a non-democratic form of government, normally comes into existence not by a mandate of the popular will, but through a seizure of power. It is therefore in essence unconstitutional, the offspring of a *coup d'état*. The dictator, on seizing power, generally announces that the seizure is tempor-

ary only—it is an emergency measure designed to tide the country over a crisis—and it is possible that there have been occasions when this announcement has been made in good faith. Nevertheless, power once obtained continues to be retained when the crisis is over, either because it proves too pleasurable to be relinquished or because its relinquishment is considered to be fraught with too much danger to its holders. Its retention, however, being, like its acquisition, strictly unconstitutional, provokes distrust and resentment on the part of opposition elements which are none the less formidable because they are driven underground. Now, precisely because the power of a dictatorship is *not* based upon the wills of a consenting populace—even if it is so temporarily based, the dictator can never, because of the censorship which he imposes, feel assured that it is—the knowledge that underground opposition exists provokes alarm. The alarm drives the dictatorship to adopt violent and coercive measures against its opponents, real or imaginary, which, inspiring hatred in those who suffer, fear in those who expect to suffer, from them, provoke further coercion on the part of those who conceive themselves to be the objects of hatred. Meanwhile the dictatorship, conscious that it is an object of suspicion and distrust to the outside world, and uneasy, as such a government must always be, in the knowledge that it may not carry with it the support of the people, is driven to justify its régime by results. It announces that it is averting a danger, preserving the State, conquering an empire, creating a new civilization, or acting as a bulwark against the forces of barbarism (represented at the moment as those of Communism or Fascism, according to choice and need) which threaten to disrupt the old civilization. Now, whether these

results are in fact achieved, or whether, if they are, they are worth the price which is being paid for them, is always an open question. Being open, it is a question which men may well feel tempted to discuss. Yet, because "results" are in a quite special sense the justification of the dictatorship, it is precisely this discussion which it cannot afford to permit. If it must justify by results, it cannot allow its results to be criticized.

### *Familiar Phenomena of Dictatorship*

From these considerations the familiar phenomena of dictatorship derive. There is the dogma of infallibility; whatever the State does is good because the State does it.<sup>1</sup> Whereas in a democracy it is recognized that a policy adopted with the best intentions and disinterestedly judged to be in the then existing circumstances the best in the field is nevertheless open from the first to certain objections, and may quite frequently turn out badly in the result; and whereas these facts are considered to constitute a legitimate ground for criticism, which may be equally disinterested, of the policy at the time of its promulgation, to express doubt of a dictator's policy is to threaten the safety of the State. Thus criticism is equated with disaffection, disagreement with treason; while the right of citizens freely to express their views with regard to the policy of the government that professes to represent them, and the laws which they are required to obey, is suppressed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "National Socialism cannot be judged right in this and wrong in that respect. As we, the National Socialists, are convinced that we are right, we cannot tolerate any other in our neighbourhood who claims also to be right."

<sup>2</sup> "We deny the right to criticize the Government to those who have no share in the responsibility and the burden of work."

<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> Dr. Goebbels in a speech delivered March 1934.

Not the least disturbing feature of the development I have outlined is that it is the result of a process which is not contingent but necessary—proceeding, that is to say, inevitably from the nature of dictatorship. A democratic government is legitimized by law and rests on popular consent. It can, therefore, afford to make mistakes, to concede that it is not infallible, to admit criticism. A dictator, not having the assurance of consent, cannot permit these liberties. Thus a dictatorship is logically driven, by the circumstances of its origin and the nature of its being, to suppress the freedom of its citizens. The tendency to suppress is cumulative and develops by its own inherent momentum until the extremes of persecution are reached.

### *Centralization*

Whatever makes for centralization, by concentrating effective power in a few hands, favours dictatorship; whatever makes for local autonomy and local variation by diffusing power impairs dictatorship. A high degree of centralization is, therefore, a feature of dictatorial government, characterizing the governments of Cæsar in Rome, of Napoleon in France, of Mussolini in Italy, of Hitler in Germany. It is no accident that the modern dictatorships suppress independent organizations of workers and employers in favour of State-controlled corporations, or that in the Third Reich the *Landtags* of the German States have been superseded and their duties taken over by *Statthalters* appointed by the Central Government. Nor is it only local governmental units that are abolished. Organizations which cater for the free activity of the human mind, or promote the free expression of the human spirit along channels or towards ideals of which the democratic



State takes no cognisance, are equally repugnant to dictatorship. It is no accident that the Rationalist movement has been disbanded in Germany, or that the cult of Nudism has been persecuted. The elimination of variety, the ironing out of individual and local differences, the forcing of all citizens into the same Protean bed of thought and behaviour, all these are justified in the name of unity.

### *Artificial Unity*

The cultural counterparts of centralized government are standardized thought and uniform behaviour. It is obvious that men who think alike and behave alike are more amenable to government. It is easier to govern sheep or robots than men, and in proportion as men's thought and behaviour approximate to that of the flock or of the machine they are easier to regulate. The relation between government and citizens is in this respect reciprocal. While the existence of standardized thought and behaviour facilitates the establishment of dictatorial government, dictatorial government promotes the thought and imposes the behaviour that strengthens it.

Inevitably the policy of dictatorship fosters the unity upon which it thrives, seeks to create it when it does not exist, and proclaims it when it cannot create it. That the object of education in Nazi Germany is the inculcation into the younger generation of standardized thoughts and sentiments the quotations given in the last Chapter sufficiently testify.<sup>1</sup> Religion is suborned to the same object; hence the struggle in the German Protestant Church between the German Christians and the League of opposition clergy headed by Dr. Niemol-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV, p. 114; also Chapter VI, pp. 188, 189.

ler,<sup>1</sup> and the oppressive measures taken by the State against the members of the Catholic Church, who impair the ideal of unity by insisting upon regarding the Pope as their spiritual head. With a view to promoting identity of thinking upon political matters even in the home, the Parish Council of Dettingen in Württemberg has decided to present all couples married before the Registrar with a copy of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. Even science must toe the political line, and a resolution passed at a Conference of the Rectors of Prussian Universities and other High Schools held at Berlin in February 1934 affirms "the necessity of an inner revival of science and of the University out of the idea of National Socialism. . . . National Socialism is the only live and creative force which is freeing science and the German University from the break-up into purely specialized theoretical and departmental divisions."<sup>2</sup> It is, indeed, a triumph of the spirit of unity to have effected the synthesis of the sciences by breaking down the partitions that have hitherto separated them.

Unity is also desired as an end in itself for purely sentimental reasons. The spirit of the flock, the herd, and the pack is still strong in the human soul, and there are many who, especially when young, like to think that they are members of a body of persons every one of whom feels and thinks exactly as they do themselves. The leaders of such a body have a special emotional interest in inculcating and strengthening this predilection for unity. To lead a united band redounds to

<sup>1</sup> Members of the League maintain that the Old Testament forms an integral part of Christian teaching although written by Jews, that Christ was a Jew, and that their consciences will not permit them to accept the dictation of the State in matters of religious doctrine and practice.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, February 16, 1934.

one's credit; it also strengthens one's hand. Dictators like to feel that they have the country behind them, and are skilful at disguising even from themselves the fact that they have not.

## II. EFFECTS OF DICTATORSHIP UPON THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS

I turn to the effects produced by the above-mentioned characteristics of dictatorial governments on the individuals who are subject to them. For purposes of convenience these may be divided into effects upon men's minds, upon their imaginations, and upon their emotions.

### (1) *The Mind of Man under Dictatorship*

The disinterested activity of the human mind is primarily concerned with the discovery of truth. Of the ways in which new truth comes I have already spoken in the last Chapter. New truth is, I there pointed out, revealed to the insight of peculiarly gifted individuals. It remains to re-state briefly from the negative side the case already outlined positively.

Truth is not, the fact is obvious, discovered by the mass mind. We may even share Plato's doubt as to whether the mass mind can assimilate it. Abstract truth is usually subtle and complex, whereas the minds of masses of men are comparatively simple and unable to grasp other than simple ideas. It may be doubted whether the minds of most individuals do, in fact, comprehend truth at all; they comprehend the nearest thing to the truth of which they are capable. It is largely for this reason that, as I pointed out in the last Chapter, by far the greater part of what mankind has hitherto accepted as truth is not in fact truth, but error.

That this is so in the spheres of mathematics and philosophy and the theoretical science, the spheres of what is usually known as abstract truth, most would agree. Many would, however, be inclined to demur with regard to the application of the generalization to the so-called applied truths of the practical reason. "The world to-day," they would point out, "is scientifically minded as never before. Men know the causes of phenomena, demand evidence for their beliefs, and are accordingly emancipated from the grosser forms of superstition. Science has also," they would add, "substituted a speed of two hundred miles an hour in an aeroplane for a speed of four miles an hour on foot, and dowered the world with the wireless, the cinema, and the motor-bus. Now, scientific achievement and the application of its results to human life can flourish under a dictatorship as well as under any other form of government. Hitler and Mussolini do not discourage scientific research. On the contrary . . ."

### *Science and the Ordinary Man*

It is on these lines that dictatorship might be and is defended as being not, after all, inimical to the advance of science and the discovery of new truth.

The defence is not impressive. That men are not as superstitious as they were may be plausibly denied. It may be contended, for example, that they have merely substituted new superstitions for old—a contention for which the cults of Spiritualism and Christian Science, the deliberate revival in Germany of the myth and the worship of the fetish of racial purity, afford ample illustration. I do not myself subscribe to this denial; on the contrary, I believe that science has engendered a realization of the nature of evidence and a

respect for truth among numbers of quite ordinary people<sup>1</sup> which, unless we forfeit these gains in the chaos of a new Dark Ages, may well prove to be the most valuable assets of our race. But the scientific habit of mind does not occur spontaneously among masses of men; it is, indeed, unnatural in them. It appears initially as a peculiarity of gifted individuals and spreads among more ordinary men only in so far as the ideas of these individuals reach the minds of the people, and the successful application of scientific "results" to the amelioration of human life wins their respect.

This consideration raises a further point. The apology just made insists that "a scientifically minded" community has nothing to fear from dictatorship. But what the imaginary apologist intends by the expression "scientifically minded" is a community which utilizes and exploits the results of science. It is, of course, true that men everywhere enjoy the results of science and have learnt to apply them to life; it is also true that such enjoyment and application are in general undisturbed by dictatorship. But the enjoyment and application of the results of science do not imply sympathy with the spirit of disinterested research or with the disinterested love of truth. Modern civilization and its scientific wonders are the results of endowing a population of unscientifically-minded persons with the fruits of the work of half-a-dozen men of scientific genius. Contrast, for example, the wonder of the wireless or the miracle of the "talkies" with the use to which men put these wonders! It is of the acquisition of disinterested knowledge, of the pursuit of truth for its own sake irrespective of any use to which it may be put, the capacity for which is one of the chief

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VI, pp. 211, 212, for a development of this view.

glories of the human race, that I am speaking when I say that knowledge is not acquired, truth is not discovered by the mass mind. (Knowledge which is worth while is the fruit of the disinterested activity of the free intelligence. Truth which is new is revealed to the insight of independent-minded individuals. The mind that appreciates no less than the mind that discovers truth must own no laws save those of its own reasoning. It is precisely this type of mental activity that a dictatorship discountenances. The education which it fosters is, indeed, intended to inhibit it.) I have already given in the last Chapter a number of quotations to indicate the aims of education as conceived by dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> I shall add some more in the next.<sup>2</sup> I shall content myself with indicating here why (a dictatorship cannot tolerate the kind of education which seeks to develop men's minds and to make them free and active.)

### *Education under Dictatorship*

Education should have two main functions: the first, to furnish the necessary instruments—reading, writing, and figuring—without which there cannot be education; the second, to create the mental habits which will enable those possessing the instruments to use them for themselves. In this second capacity its concern should be to provide, not information, but training in an art: the art of using one's intelligence in the most effective way—the art, in a word, of thinking. It should teach not what to think, but how. The first function of education may be defined as the provision of information, the second as the creation of intelligence. To give information without intelligence is to open a man's ears to the voice of reason without giving him

<sup>1</sup> See p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 188, 189.

the power to close them against the cries and catch-words of the hour, with the result that the voice of reason, being small, is drowned. It is to give the power to hear and to read without the ability to criticize what is heard and read. Thus in war-time under the guise of patriotism men's idealism is exploited to induce them to die in the defence of selfish interests under the impression that they are fighting for truth and right. In peace-time the manufacture of opinion in a modern community has become a fine art. So long as men are prepared to pay the dentist who fills their teeth more than the journalist who fills their heads, it is only reasonable to suppose that they will be offered cheap and nasty substitutes for wholesome mental diet. The critical mind is on its guard against these substitutes, shunning them as it would shun adulterated food. Yet without the protection of a critical sense which only education can provide, the defenceless mind has no alternative but to swallow ready-made whatever mental fodder is offered to it by the organizations which control the avenues through which it is reached.

Dictatorial governments distrust education which seeks to train the intelligence, precisely because it affords the mind of the ordinary man protection against those who would exploit it for their own purposes. Those whose function it is to govern people for their alleged good do not desire that men and women should think for themselves, since those who think for themselves are liable to cause difficulties for the governors. Only the guardians, as Plato would say, are to think; the rest are to follow their leaders like a flock of sheep. Thus it is not surprising that those who profit most by the sheepishness of the public should desire to deprive the public of opportunities for that kind of education

which, aiming primarily at the creation of intelligence, would train the mind in the capacity for independent thinking. (While a critical and informed public opinion is a pre-requisite of democracy, a docile and uncritically minded public is the tool of dictatorship. A government based upon force and maintaining itself through fear has every incentive to keep its citizens uneducated and, because uneducated, uncritical. Hence education under a dictatorship aims at substituting a readiness to accept the ideas of others for a capacity for forming one's own. Its object is to manufacture an outlook, not to develop a mind. It is no accident that the Russian Government should have sanctioned<sup>1</sup> the distribution of fifty million text-books to primary and secondary schools to teach the beliefs of Marxism and the interpretation of history according to the principles of Economic Determinism. On the other hand, a government which governs by consent has nothing to fear from an educated public. On the contrary, it relies upon and is strengthened by the competence of its citizens. Hence democracy is the friend of education, since it knows that in defending education it is defending that which has made it what it is. A successful democracy alone among forms of government has everything to gain and nothing to lose from the intelligence of its citizens. )

### *The Arts under Dictatorship*

"They tell me that we have no literature now in France. I will speak to the Minister of the Interior about it." The remark, Napoleon's, aptly illustrates the attitude of the dictator to art and the plight of the arts under dictatorship. If liberty is the air, the arts

<sup>1</sup> February 1934.



are the flowers of the spirit. Like flowers, they can bloom only in a favourable environment, an environment which permits the spirit to blow where it listeth. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that they cannot be made to bloom by Act of Parliament. It is none the less true. You can no more cultivate the spirit of man by legislative enactment than you can break it by persecution. You can threaten to punish a poet if he does not turn out a sonnet a week, and you will get your sonnets; but, as the melancholy record of the Poets Laureate has shown, you will not get good sonnets.

Hence, when men's minds are required to march in step and their imaginations to function to order, art and literature may be expected to go into retirement; and this, as history frequently demonstrates, is precisely what happens. Compare, for example, the literature of the Roman Empire with that of the Roman Republic. After Vergil and Lucretius, Ovid and Horace, Catullus and Propertius, Livy and Cicero, only the names of Tacitus and the younger Seneca, Juvenal, and Martial, stand out from the welter of mediocrity which was literature over a period of three hundred years. Compare the output and quality of literature, and particularly of poetic literature, in Germany during the early part of the nineteenth century with the output and quality under Bismarck and subsequently under William II. Compare the painting of the France of the Revolution and the First Empire, when it was expected of pictures that they should glorify the ideals of the State, with the outburst of original artistic genius that characterized the later part of the nineteenth century, and especially the period *after* the fall of Napoleon III. David, no doubt, was a great painter, though much of his work is pictorial propaganda turned out to order;

but, after David, Ingres was the only painter of merit who flourished under the dictatorship.<sup>1</sup> What a contrast with the number and the brilliance of those who came afterwards—with Manet and Monet, Renoir and Cézanne, Degas, Sisley and Seurat. Nor is this poverty of the arts under dictatorship solely due to the fact that sensitive and gifted individuals revolt against the imposition of culture from above, and, protesting against the attempt to canalize the flow of the human spirit between political banks, are exiled or silenced because of their protest. It is also that the policy of a dictatorship, which is to take art and letters under its wing and to use them for moral and political ends, kills the objects of its patronage.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the course of recorded history genius and dictatorship have been ill bedfellows, nor do they lie down together more happily to-day. Germany is not big enough to hold Hitler and Einstein; while Mr. de Valera, whose approval must be obtained for its programme by the Abbey Theatre as a State-subsidized institution, finds himself unable to sanction the inclusion of *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Plough and the Stars*, the two greatest single works of genius that the Irish Theatre has produced, in the list of plays to be performed during the Company's American tour.

### *The Emotions under Dictatorship*

A dictatorship, as we have seen, must cultivate uniformity in the interests of unity. It therefore looks

<sup>1</sup> Ingres lived on until 1867, so that only a small part of his productive life was passed under the dictatorship conditions of the First Empire.

<sup>2</sup> "The principle of authoritative leadership will define the range within which the artist is to move." Dr. Goebbels, as reported in *The Times*, June 5th, 1934.

askance at individuality and distrusts the man who is different. The ideal citizen from a dictator's point of view is the man who feels certain specified emotions, entertains certain specified opinions, is animated by certain specified sentiments—namely, those emotions, opinions, and sentiments which confirm the position and enhance the prestige of the government. The perfect citizen, in a word, is the one who always gives his rulers the answers they expect. Now, the answers which rulers expect will be the same as the answers given by all the other citizens. The policy of a dictatorship will, therefore, be to train and develop those aspects of men's nature which they possess in common, and to discourage and to suppress those aspects in respect of which they differ. Its object, in a word, will be to substitute deference for difference. In order to achieve this object it will, so far as possible, appeal to men's emotions and discountenance their reasons.

### *Diversity and Development*

An appeal so directed cannot but be prejudicial to the progress of man. The more human beings develop, the more diversity they exhibit. Hungering for a beef-steak, feeling attracted to a young woman, breaking the furniture in a rage, boasting in liquor and cringing when hurt, I am, I imagine, experiencing emotions which are almost identical with those of my savage ancestors. My behaviour on these occasions, at any rate, is similar although more restrained. But my responses to a Bach Fugue or a philosophical argument are profoundly different; different and richer. They are also profoundly different from, although not richer than, the responses of an equally educated and intelligent adult of my own generation. In so far as I am

moved by emotions and desires which originate with the stomach, the glands, the bowels, or the heart, my behaviour is like that of millions of other males past and present; in so far as my conduct is inspired by intellectual curiosity and dominated by reason, it is profoundly different. Now, it is the differences between people that are interesting, not their likenesses. The reactions of a clerk and a collier to the attraction of the mouth of a pretty waitress offering kisses, the reactions of a Frenchman or a German to the peril of the mouth of a machine-gun spattering bullets, are very much alike. Inevitably, since the adrenal glands<sup>1</sup> of the Frenchman and the German do not share in the nationalist differences of their owners—indeed, they are probably indistinguishable. Now, these reactions are, I maintain, profoundly uninteresting. There is little that is new to learn about lust and fear. But the reactions of a typical French mind and a typical German mind to a romantic poem, a logical train of thought, or a new metaphysic tend to be different, and different in a way which is significant of the racial differences between the French and German, the Latin and the Teutonic, peoples. Again, the reactions of a young man who is romantically in love and a middle-aged musical critic who is not to the Prelude to the third act of *Tristan and Isolde* and to the thirty-eighth Fugue of Bach's 48 Preludes and Fugues are different and revealingly different. For the differences reveal the origins and kinds of æsthetic appreciation. A romantic youth we should expect to like Wagner. He is, after all, in love not with music, but with his own emotions, which Wagner enhances and glorifies. But the middle-aged connoisseur, who has left romance

<sup>1</sup> Those parts of the body which seem to be most distinctively involved in the motivation of fear.

behind him, desiderates in music only a pattern of pure form. He does not demand of his music that it should arouse emotion; he is content that it should be beautiful. I give these examples at random not because I expect my readers to agree with them—some, no doubt, will disagree, and disagree violently—but because the very circumstance of their disagreement will serve to establish my point.

*Differences in Men Concentrated in Human Faculties  
Lately Evolved*

And the point briefly is that it is in the higher and more lately evolved faculties of human beings that the differences between them reside. The lower and more primitive exhibit their fundamental identity. In his love of art, in his pursuit of knowledge, in his approach to nature, in his attitude to the mystery that underlies the superficial seeming of things, man differs significantly from man. In his emotional and sentimental life he differs very much less.

There are certain emotions and sentiments which all men have in common. Many of those are bad; such are fear, envy, malice, intolerance, resentment of what is superior, and hatred of the strange and the different. Some, good in themselves, can be exploited for evil ends; such are courage and loyalty, protectiveness of what one holds dear, aggressiveness against that which is thought to threaten what is dear. Now, a dictatorship, as we have seen, demands unity—unity of behaviour, unity of thought, and unity of feeling. It will, then, be most likely to achieve this unity by appealing to those sides of men's nature which they possess in common, in virtue of which they think alike, feel alike, and react alike to the same stimuli. It follows that a dicta-

torship will seek primarily to appeal to and to arouse men's emotions, and in particular those emotions of which I have just given examples, which all men experience in common. Hence the appeals for service and discipline and loyalty, the deliberate playing upon the sentiments of racial superiority and exclusiveness, the cultivation of man's protectiveness in the interests of the safety of the State, and the evocation of the sentiments of fear and suspicion against those who can be represented as its enemies. Nazi education, the speeches of Mussolini, the writings of Herr Banse, become intelligible when it is realized that they deliberately aim at the cultivation of those sides of men's nature which they hold in common, since it is through the evocation of common emotions that unity can be most easily secured.

As the psycho-analysts would say, the dictator must appeal to men's primitive Masochism and Sadism—that is, to his desires to mortify himself in service and to inflict injury through aggression upon others.

### *Outcome in War*

(Nor is it difficult to see that the logical outcome of this tendency is war. War is the most effective method of inducing uniformity of feeling, of ironing out differences and silencing criticism. Hence dictators, even when they dare not go to war, will keep the possibility of war ever before the people, and by making them a prey to the emotions of fear and suspicion and hatred, by inducing in them a condition of inflamed aggressiveness and alarmed loyalty, encourage the more primitive aspects of man's nature at the expense of the more recently evolved. Thus the effect of dictatorship is to militate against the progress of man.)

*A Summary : The Importance of " Difference "*

(The nature of dictatorship is to iron out differences and to cultivate uniformity. Such a policy spells disaster for the future and produces deadness in the present. It spells disaster for the future because, while it is to the personal insight of odd individuals that, as we have seen, the advance of the race is due, in the interests of unity it discourages oddness and represses individuality. It produces deadness in the present, since to eliminate differences is to eliminate all that keeps the community mentally and spiritually alive.) It is to substitute a unison for a harmony, for, as Aristotle pointed out, without variety of types unison may be possible, but harmony will be excluded.

(Mill was surely right in holding that a society in which it was worth while to live was one in which men's minds were free—free, that is to say, to differ from each other. Variety was to him the spice of life, and in the standardization of opinion imposed by dictatorship he would have seen not only the impoverishment of the spirit and the deadening of the mind of the community, but also the suppression of all that makes the life of civilized men interesting, vital, and gay. Time and again in writing this book I have resisted the temptation to quote at length from Mill. At this point I have decided to indulge myself with a single quotation from one of the finest passages in his essay :—" It is not by wearing down into uniformity all that is individual in themselves, but by cultivating it, and calling it forth, within the limits imposed by the rights and interests of others, that human beings become a noble and beautiful object of contemplation ; and as the works partake the character of those who do them, by the same process

human life also becomes rich, diversified, and animating, furnishing more abundant aliment to high thoughts and elevating feelings, and strengthening the tie which binds every individual to the race, by making the race infinitely better worth belonging to."<sup>1</sup>)

### III. EFFECTS OF DICTATORSHIP UPON THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY

#### *Stagnation of Mental Life*

A brief treatment here will suffice, and for two reasons. In the first place, the effects are clear, unmistakable, and almost invariable. In the second place, others have delineated them more vividly than I can hope to do. The theme, indeed, is one which has attracted great writers. (T. H. Green and John Stuart Mill, and in our own day Bernard Shaw, have known that the suppression of free and creative thought meant death and stagnation to society, and they have given memorable expression to their knowledge.) The political sentiments of many of his old-time admirers have suffered a series of shocks from the authoritarian tendencies of Shaw's later plays, and there is a general tendency to deplore what is regarded as his unseemly flirtation with dictatorship. Yet it is impossible to read the Preface to his latest play, *On the Rocks*, with its sections on "The Importance of Free Thought" and "The Sacredness of Criticism," without realizing that he too shares the fundamental conviction of Green and Mill, that (the liberty—which none has enjoyed more completely than Shaw himself—to disparage to the full extent of his capacity for ridicule and invective the democratic institutions which have permitted the disparagement, is

<sup>1</sup> *Essay On Liberty*, p. 76 (Thinker's Library ed., Watts).



the very life-blood of society; and that, while the State must protect itself against persons and doctrines which threaten its disruption, it suppresses creative ideas at the cost of a stagnation of mental activity which must eventually bring about its own decay. . . .)

(Nor is the permission to criticize less important than the capacity to create. "Civilization," says Shaw in the Preface to which I have referred, "cannot progress without criticism, and must therefore, to save itself from stagnation and putrefaction, declare impunity for criticism." Stagnation of mental activity among citizens is what no State which aspires to maintain its position in the comity of nations can afford. Yet it is precisely such stagnation which a dictatorship produces in its subjects. It not only forbids them to exercise their minds; it forbids them also to entertain beliefs, except in so far as they are its own. Now, as Mill perceived, "one person with a belief is a social force equal to ninety-nine who have only interests," and in inhibiting the convictions of its citizens the State drains them of "social force." In draining them it robs itself. For the general stagnation of mental activity spreads ultimately to public life, or rather it starts in public life, which is the sphere most directly under dictatorial control, and spreads outwards until, as we have seen, it stultifies education, retards research, and infects the remotest realms of literature and art.)

I am here primarily concerned with the sphere of public life, the starting point of the infection.

### *Apathy in Public Life : Its Consequences*

(That apathy is the distinguishing characteristic of public life under dictatorship all observers seem to be agreed. Knowing that they cannot give effect to their

wishes, that their wills cannot be made to count, that issues are decided not by them but for them, and that they cannot, save by underhand methods, affect by one iota the course of events, men lose interest in the affairs of State and perform their public duties perfunctorily or not at all.)

Attention was first drawn to the operation of these consequences by writers of the Roman Empire, when, as Pliny records, men's aversion from participation in public affairs became so great that members of noble families were compelled, on pain of proscription or imprisonment, to enter the public service and take their part in the government of the provinces. Even when, from a feeling of civic obligation, they voluntarily undertook the duties of administration, they regarded them with distaste and looked forward to the time when they could retire from public life into the society of their friends and edit the poets. Some modern historians, notably Professor Unwin, have diagnosed this lack of public zeal on the part of citizens as the most potent single cause of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. This public apathy which dictatorship generates, evil in itself, produces two evil consequences, each of which is a source of weakness and danger to the State. First, citizens do little for themselves, with the result that more has to be done for them. Those who are actively engaged in a job whose success depends upon their own exertions find sufficient satisfaction in the work that lies to their hands. Their pleasure is in service, their reward in success. Even if they fail, they fail only to find that service to the community constitutes its own reward, provided that the service be freely given, that it calls forth to the full the talents and the energies of those engaged in it, and that

it implies some degree of responsibility for the direction of affairs. Hence those who are doing most for the community are apt to demand least from it.

Under a dictatorship the reverse considerations operate, and the State must command by bribery and threats the service which citizens no longer offer freely for the pleasure of serving. As for the populace, it must be kept in a good humour at the State's expense. Hence the distribution of *panem et circenses*, which appears as an almost invariable feature of dictatorship, a distribution which, as the public appetite grows with what it feeds on, becomes ever more burdensome.<sup>1</sup> For the subjects of dictatorship are like a kept mistress, who, growing ever more exacting, demands from her lover more lavish gifts as the price of the good temper upon which her favours depend.

### *Apathy in a Democracy Untypical and Due to Special Causes*

If men are relegated to the rôle of passive spectators of affairs in which they might actively have participated, affairs must, it is obvious, be made sufficiently interesting to hold their attention. If they are to watch the game of politics, not play it, the game must be exciting.

A community, responsible through its elected representatives for the conduct of affairs, may be expected to maintain some interest in affairs. For the community knows that if Parliament governs awry it can change it, while the individual citizen, dissatisfied with the policy of the Government, is at liberty to voice his dissatisfaction and to induce his fellow citizens to share it.

<sup>1</sup> Hitler has, as Aldous Huxley has pointed out, gone one better. Supplying the circuses, he has managed so far to dispense with the bread. And so far it has worked!

If he can persuade enough of them to share it, he has a reasonable assurance that the policy will be altered.<sup>1</sup> Thus every politically-minded citizen may expect, through his freedom of criticism and comment, to influence, in however small a degree, the course of events.

The difficulties of and dissatisfaction with democracy described in Chapters II and III are in no small measure due to the fact that the size and complexity of the modern State render it difficult for the individual to feel that in exercising this traditional democratic right of free criticism and comment he can make his voice heard. The resultant impotence and apathy of the ordinary citizen are among the root causes of the contemporary decline of democracy.

### *War the Inevitable End*

Under a dictatorship the impotence, the helplessness, and the apathy are chronic and inevitable. And, since a dictator cannot afford to allow his subjects to become completely indifferent to the State, for fear lest, when he needs some demonstration of loyalty wherewith to impress, or some display of force wherewith to repel, the foreigner, the demonstration and the force may not be forthcoming, he is compelled to create and to keep alive an artificial interest by alarms and excursions.

<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, the case that democracies try on occasion to take a leaf out of the book of dictatorship by hedging the established law with such safeguards that it becomes practically impossible to change it. The extent to which a democracy succeeds in doing this is also the measure of the enfeeblement of the public spirit of its citizens. Imagine, for example, the effect upon the attitude to public life of those American citizens who hold progressive views in regard to birth control of the Act passed by the Legislature of the State of New York forbidding the dissemination of literature in favour of the repeal of the Act forbidding the dissemination of literature in favour of the legalization of birth control.

Hence the demonstrations, the parades, the public shows, for which dictatorships are notorious; hence, too, the deliberate inculcation of patriotism, the insistence upon discipline, the frequent appeals to loyalty; and hence, finally, the belligerent foreign policies, the sabre-rattling speeches, the demands for expansion, the insistence upon historic rights, the cries for vengeance, the consciousness of mission. All these are directed to fomenting in the populace an atmosphere of feverish excitement as a substitute for a genuine and steady public spirit. And inevitably the stunts, the threats, the belligerencies, culminate sooner or later in war. ))

War, as we have seen, provides precisely the atmosphere upon which dictatorships thrive, an atmosphere in which men become the preys of emotion and the dupes of propaganda, while fear prompts them to surrender their liberties into the keeping of their self-chosen protectors. Hence dictatorship prepares for war, glorifies war, preaches war, and in the end, whether it wants to or no, is driven to make war. The intelligent English citizen of a democracy is apt to experience a shocked surprise in coming upon Mussolini's avowal in his article<sup>1</sup> in the *Italian Encyclopædia* that "Fascism believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace," since "war alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to meet it." Let him but realize that such an avowal forms an integral and necessary part of the ideology of dictatorship, and, though he may still feel dismay, he will no longer express surprise.

<sup>1</sup> *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism.*

## IV. IS IT WORTH IT?

*Economic "Goods" of Dictatorship*

And, inevitably, the question arises, Is it worth it? Dictatorship, if I am right, is attended by certain positive drawbacks. It kills the spirit, deadens the mind, irons out differences, paralyses public life. It appeals to and relies upon the more primitive elements in man's nature, and fears and discourages the exercise of his more lately evolved faculties. Also it suppresses liberty, while its cruelty and brutality strain the credence no less than they shock the sentiments of civilized man.

What concrete good is offered in return for these disadvantages? It is said that the citizens of countries living under a dictatorship are happy and united, and that their governments are beneficent and do good works among the people. To examine the validity of this contention would take us far beyond the scope of this book. I hope, however, that what has been said in this Chapter and the last will lead the reader seriously to distrust the view that citizens who have reached even the most moderate degree of mental development can be permanently happy under a dictatorship. Of the more concrete disabilities of dictatorship, of the horrors of the concentration camp and the penal settlement, of the system of espionage, of the secret police, of the fear which makes a man afraid to speak his mind to his friend—this is no place to write. It seems unlikely, however, that these things contribute to happiness.

*The "Rewards" of Dictatorship!*

But while we have no space for a general examination of the apologia for dictatorship, the suggestion that a

dictatorship is a fatherly government which, in its anxiety for the public weal, provides bread for the common people and public works for the unemployed deserves a moment's consideration. It is Mussolini's name that is most often mentioned in this connection. How, then, does the contention square with the facts of the contemporary economic situation in Italy? Take first Mussolini's programme of public works. I quote from a report in the *New Statesman and Nation*:—

“There is real progress in the production of hydro-electric power. Great Britain, without hydraulic resources, is making even greater progress in a similar field. As for transport, old roads have been macadamized and repaired in Italy, and new roads completed. But the total expenditure of the Road Board since 1928 was only £64,000,000. Scarcely an impressive effort for ‘a new economic system.’ 670 miles of new roads were completed in four years in Italy. In Great Britain, without Fascism, 1,305 miles of Class I roads were completed in the four years ended 1931. And they are much better roads. The total expenditure on public works during the ten years of the Fascist régime is less than the annual loans for local works out of the Local Loans Fund in Great Britain!”<sup>1</sup>

What is the state of the country as a whole after ten years of Fascist rule? I quote again from the *New Statesman and Nation* report:—

“Is it true that Italy ‘is in a somewhat better position than her neighbours’ to weather the economic storm? Her internal Public Debt exceeds its pre-Fascist dimensions. The budgetary deficit for 1931-2 was £23,000,000; for 1932-3 more than £70,000,000. Treasury deficits are mainly recouped from the funds of

<sup>1</sup> *New Statesman and Nation*, November 18, 1933.

the Savings Banks and the reserves of the social insurance institutions! Exceptional war expenditure apart, the Italian Finance Minister had a smaller deficit in the two years preceding the March on Rome. The total foreign trade in 1932 has shrunk 48 per cent. as compared with 1930. The 'balance of trade' is still unfavourable. . . . A partial census of industry shows an average percentage of employment of 67.2 per cent., as compared with September 1926. The monthly average of unemployment for the year 1932 was 1,006,441 as compared with 409,390 for 1922.

"The index figure for the cost of living has fallen 15.73 per cent. since 1927. But industrial wages have been reduced by a much larger proportion. Reductions effected without the consent of the syndical organizations are widely found. In the glass industries the reductions range from 20 to 40 per cent.; in the cotton trade 40 per cent.; in silk weaving 38 per cent.; in the metallurgical trades 23 per cent., excluding reductions in the case of individual firms which had been accorded on a vast scale. Additional supplementary and arbitrary reductions without negotiations have been effected by the regrading of work staffs and the systematic reduction of piece rates. . . . As for the state of business, bankruptcies, great and small, exceeded 21,000 in 1932, which beats the British record five times over."<sup>1</sup>

In the circumstances the report that Mussolini has forbidden any mention in the Italian papers of the financial position revealed by the English Budget of 1934 should not occasion surprise.<sup>2</sup>

It is as yet too early to give equivalent figures for

<sup>1</sup> *New Statesman and Nation*, November 18, 1933.

<sup>2</sup> I have space here only to illustrate my thesis—namely, the failure of dictatorship to deliver the economic goods. The reader who wishes to pursue the subject is recommended to read John Strachey's book, *The Menace of Fascism*.



Germany, since the dictatorship in that country has at the time of writing been in existence for little more than a year. Nevertheless, a speech to employers and workmen in April 1934 by Dr. Ley, President of the Labour Front, throws a significant light upon economic conditions after a year of Nazi rule. To the employers he said: "The Labour Front must make it clear that, although he had a right to profit, he" (the employer) "had no right at the present time to take any profit, whatever out of his business. At a time when the worker was to some extent being paid starvation wages in the interests of the reconstruction of the nation, the utmost sacrifice must also be demanded of the other partner."<sup>1</sup> To the workers his message was that "at the same time the worker must realize that, while the State was finding bread and work for seven million unemployed, he must renounce wage increases and such-like things for the time being."<sup>1</sup> In point of fact the value of real wages is reported to have declined throughout Germany during the past year.

### *The Balance of Advantages*

It scarcely seems, from the above indications, that the economic advantages of living under a dictatorship are commensurate with the cultural and political drawbacks. It is not merely in terms of the intangible goods—liberty and self-government, the unfettered development of the spirit, the untrammelled expression of the mind—that life in a democracy has the advantage; it is, it seems, superior also in terms of roads and bread.<sup>2</sup> I

<sup>1</sup> Report in *The Times*, April 10, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the verdict of Mr. J. A. Spender, one of the most experienced political observers of our times, given in his recently published book, *These Times*—

"Whatever test we take, whether wage levels, standard of

have deliberately taken my main examples from Italy, partly because, in their horror of the German dictatorship, men tend to forget the older and therefore more familiar tyranny in Italy; partly because there is a tendency, even among liberals in England, to praise the strength and "efficiency" of the Italian Government. We are all familiar with the tourist who returns from Italy loud in Mussolini's praise because "now at any rate the trains do run to time." Strong that Government may be, in so far as the regimentation of opinion and the persecution of opponents can give strength; but, judged by the standard of benefits conferred, it would scarcely seem to be so efficient as our own democracy. In England too trains run to time. But, even if they did not, the guarantee that the most important express will arrive on the minute is of infinitely less importance than the guarantee of absolute freedom for the questing mind.

Nor, because I am concerned in this book to extol democracy at the expense of dictatorship, since, while the former can tolerate reason and afford liberty, the latter dislikes reason and suppresses liberty, should it therefore be supposed that I consider democracy to be above reproach, reason to be sacrosanct, or liberty to be without drawbacks. (Reason has its limitations; liberty is often abused; a free Press is sometimes venal and frequently trivial; democracy is often inefficient and sometimes corrupt. Agreed! But because a good thing is not always good we have no excuse for preferring a bad. Because democracy and liberty have

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living, public finance, volume of trade, general well-being, there is nothing in the condition of the countries which have sacrificed their freedom which makes it even plausible to suggest that we should gain by following their example."

their difficulties and defects we are not therefore justified in choosing dictatorship and tyranny. The limitations of reason in science afford no grounds for repudiating science and relapsing into superstition. The corruption of the Press is no excuse for imposing a censorship and muzzling opinion. The imperfections of the parliamentary system do not justify us in placing our trust in the professed benevolence of self-announced super-men. The fact that liberty may be abused is certainly no argument against liberty.)

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROSPECTS FOR LIBERTY

#### I. CHANGES SINCE MILL

I PROPOSE to begin this concluding Chapter on the prospects for liberty by a brief consideration of the changes which have led to the decline of liberty since Mill wrote his celebrated essay. My object will be to estimate how far the tendencies set going by these changes are likely to increase and lead to the permanent eclipse of liberty, and how far they are temporary only. The nineteenth century, as we have seen, believed in the rapidly approaching triumph of the cause of human freedom. What is it that has happened so grievously to disappoint the hopes of Mill writing in the middle of the century, so completely to stultify the judgment of Bury expressed twenty years ago? <sup>1</sup>

#### *Lop-sidedness of Modern Civilization*

The distinguishing characteristic of modern civilization is its lop-sidedness. It is lop-sided because of the disparity between our mechanical skill and scientific knowledge on the one hand and our political and social wisdom on the other, between our power over Nature and the use to which we put it. Science has given us powers fit for the gods, and we bring to their use the mentality of schoolboys. Look at that aeroplane humming across the summer sky; the knowledge of mathematics, of dynamics and mechanics, of electricity

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I, p. 3.

and internal combustion, the ingenuity in the application of knowledge, the skill in the working of woods and metals that have gone to its making are such as to suggest that its inventors were super-men. The intrepidity, resolution, and courage which were shown by the early flying men were the qualities of heroes. Now consider the purposes for which the modern aeroplane has been and seems increasingly likely again to be used—to drop bombs that shatter and choke, burn and poison and dismember defenceless people, so that modern war has become, in the words of Mrs. Mitcheson, “a running away with one’s children and not being able to run fast enough”; these, one feels, are the purposes of idiots or devils. Or reflect upon the miracle of the radio. Men of genius by the dozen, men of talent by the hundred, laboured in order that wireless might be. They succeeded; and with what result? The tittle-tattle of the divorce court is broadcasted to the remote Pacific, the air vibrates with the praises of toothpaste, while the ultimate ether quivers to the strains of negroid music.

This contrast between the marvel of our scientific achievement and the ignominy of our social childishness meets us at every turn. We can talk across continents and oceans, telegraph pictures, instal wireless sets in the home, listen in Ceylon to Big Ben striking in London, ride above and beneath the earth and the sea. Children can talk along wires, typewriters are silent, teeth-filling painless, liners have swimming-baths, crops are ripened by electricity, roads are made of rubber; X-rays are the windows through which we behold our insides, photographs speak and sing, murderers are tracked down by wireless, hair is waved by electric current, submarines go to the North Pole, aeroplanes to the South. . . . Yet we cannot, in the midst of our

enormous cities, provide a little space where poor children may play in comfort and safety. As an Indian philosopher said to me recently, in acid comment upon my conventional praise of the wonders of our civilization: "Yes, you can fly in the air like birds and swim in the sea like fishes; but how to walk upon the earth you do not yet know."

This lopsidedness is responsible for many of the more disconcerting phenomena of our time:—for the paradox of want in the midst of plenty—we have not the social wisdom to distribute what our scientific skill enables us to produce; for the threatened destruction of our civilization in the next war—science has made us so dangerous to one another that we can no longer afford to allow our international relations to be guided by the ethics of the jungle and informed by the mischievousness of the nursery; for the mechanized use of leisure—possessing in an unprecedented degree the means to the good life, we have yet to learn the art of living it; and for the alarming contrast between the development of the means for reaching and moulding the mind of man and the comparative lack of equivalent development in the minds so reached and moulded. It is this last disparity which is particularly pertinent to my general theme, because of the menace which it constitutes to liberty. (For the change which has occurred since the time of Mill is briefly this: that while science has increased the power of controlling men's minds, education has not yet succeeded in rendering their minds proof against control. Telling men what to think rather than how, our educational system, as I pointed out in an earlier Chapter, leaves them defenceless against the commission of that crime which, as yet unrecognized by our law, is becoming the most serious offence

which one human being can commit against another—the crime of psychological assault.)

### *New Accessibility of Men's Minds*

The new instruments which science has forged for the control of men's minds constitute one of the strongest weapons of dictatorship and one of the most serious dangers to liberty. Just as the advance of science has concentrated effective military power into fewer and fewer hands, rendering mere numbers impotent against the tank, the bomber, and the machine gun, so it has concentrated the power of opinion in the hands of those who control the wireless, the Press, and the cinema. When Herr Hitler, in March 1934, announced his scheme for the expenditure of seventy-seven million pounds on public works to reduce unemployment in Germany, his speech was relayed over the wireless to 19,500 meetings of the unemployed. It is estimated that at these meetings not less than three million people heard the "Leader." Not the least disquieting feature of the wireless is that those who are exposed to its propaganda are unable to answer back. It is difficult to estimate how much of the power of the pulpit over men's mind, how much of its delightfulness to its occupant, were due to the fact that the preacher alone was entitled to speak. But the modern wireless audience is muzzled far more effectively than any congregation.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this new power, or of the menace which it constitutes to freedom of thought. The dictators of the modern world are adepts at the exploitation of the resources of science, and have largely built up their position by appeals to the mass emotions of loyalty and patriotism, hatred and fear, which their control of the Press, the

wireless, and the cinema has enabled them to make to millions of men and women.

*Period of Reasonable Expectancy Increased*

While these new instruments devised by science increase the ease with which small groups of men obtain power, they also make it easier for them to retain it. Figures were given in the last Chapter indicating the failure of Italian Fascism to render men's lives economically more tolerable. Wages are down, the number of bankruptcies is up, while the amount of money spent on public works is less than in our own country. Yet, it appears, there is little open grumbling, and after ten years' rule the power of Italian Fascism is to all appearances solidly established.

Why is there not more discontent? Partly, of course, the suppression of its overt signs makes it impossible to judge whether there is discontent or not. Where there is no right of free meeting or free speech, and the Press is the mouthpiece of the government, it is difficult to determine the feelings of the people. But there is, I suggest, a further reason. The working out of policies in practice takes time. Results cannot, it is obvious, be expected immediately. Hence, in the case of a new régime, a period must elapse during which reasonable men will suspend judgment and withhold criticism, knowing that the government must be given time to effect those improvements by which its performance must ultimately be judged. This period may be called the period of "reasonable expectancy." Now, the power which science has placed in the hands of dictators for the control of men's minds has enormously increased this period, so that it is possible for a dictator successfully to pursue a policy of all circuses



and no bread. Thus, while the power to manufacture opinion makes it easier for the dictator to assume power, it also makes it harder for him to lose power. This is only one of the many ways in which the advance of science has added to the power of the State. So great, indeed, is the power which science brings to those in authority that many writers look forward<sup>1</sup> to the society of the future as one in which, by suitable chemical treatment before birth, by suitably conditioning the responses in babyhood, by controlling the secretions of the ductless glands, and by the exploitation of all the resources of psychology and physiology for the formation of character and outlook, the State will be able to produce at will the type of citizens it needs, replacing the independent-minded individual who flourishes in an atmosphere of liberty by a race of intellectual robots pervaded by a bovine contentment with that condition of life to which it has pleased the State to call them, and knowing no public sentiments save those of blind loyalty and uncritical admiration.

## II. THE ABSOLUTIST THEORY OF THE STATE

There are many who hold that this new power over men's minds which science has given to the State, so far from being deplored, is to be welcomed. They welcome it in the name of a certain view of the State and of the State's relation to its component members, according to which any accession to the power, any increase in the importance of the State, is a good. This theory is frequently proclaimed by upholders of the modern dictatorships and is explicitly invoked to justify the curtailment of liberty. And since, if the

<sup>1</sup> See Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Bertrand Russell's *The Scientific Outlook*, Part III.

theory can be accepted, the case for liberty which has been put forward in the preceding pages goes by the board, it is necessary to devote a few pages to showing what the theory is and why it is false.

### *What the Theory Affirms*

The theory in question is usually known as the Absolutist or Idealist theory of the State. This theory declares that the State is a personality and that it is in principle omnipotent. It is natural, therefore, that those who hold the theory and profit by its application should welcome any development which makes the State in practice what it is affirmed to be in principle. I will take four quotations from different exponents of this theory to indicate its tenets:—(a) "Fascism conceives of the State as an absolute, in comparison with which all individuals or groups are relative, only to be conceived of in their relation to the State. . . . on the other hand, the Fascist State is itself conscious, and has itself a will and a personality—thus it may be called the 'ethic' State. . . . The State, as conceived of and as created by Fascism, is a spiritual and moral fact in itself."<sup>1</sup> (b) "The State has no determinate function in a larger community, but is itself the supreme community; the guardian of a whole world, but not a factor within an organized moral world."<sup>2</sup> (c) "It is hard to see how the State can commit theft or murder in the sense in which these are moral offences."<sup>3</sup> (d) "Both fascism and nationalism regard the State as the foundation of all rights and the source of all values for the individuals composing it."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, by Benito Mussolini.

<sup>2</sup> and <sup>3</sup> Bosanquet, *Philosophical Theory of the State*, pp. 325 and 324.

<sup>4</sup> Gentile.

The first of these quotations asserts the real being of the State as a personality; the second defines by implication the relation of the State to other States; the third and fourth its relation to its own citizens. It is with this latter relation that I am here more particularly concerned. This is conceived not as the relation of an instrument to those who use it to give effect to their wills and express their purposes, but as that of a substantive individual to its component members upon whom it imposes its will on the pretext that it is expressing theirs. The State, in fact, on this view is not made for man; man is made for the State.

*Criticism of the Theory.<sup>1</sup> The Supersession of the State*

Let me begin by drawing attention to the special significance of the expression *the State*, which implies: (1) that the State is a peculiar organization with rights and powers over its members of a special kind, (2) that the State is a *final* form of human organization, and (3) that its nature can be considered in isolation without taking into account its relations to other States. Each of these conclusions is in fact drawn either explicitly or implicitly as an integral part of the theory in question.<sup>2</sup>

Against this view I would urge that the State is simply one particular form of human organization

<sup>1</sup> This criticism does not, of course, pretend to be complete. The reader is recommended to consult L. T. Hobhouse's *The Metaphysical Theory of the State* for a convincing refutation of Absolutism.

<sup>2</sup> Consider, for example, the following: "Transcending the brief limits of individual life, it" (the State) "represents the immanent spirit of the nation. . . . It is the State which educates its citizens in civic virtue, gives them a consciousness of their mission and welds them into unity. . . . It leads men from primitive tribal life to that highest expression of human power which is Empire" (*The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, Mussolini).

which has been historically evolved, which is provisional, and which in all probability will be superseded. The course of evolution, as Dr. Langdon Brown has recently pointed out, consists in increasing not the size of the cell or of the individual, but of the unit of organization. Evolution, in fact, is a process by which ever more numerous and diverse units are integrated into ever richer and more comprehensive wholes. The earliest forms of life are unicellular. An advance takes place when numbers of unicellular units come together to constitute an individual who is a colony of cells. At a very early stage in the evolution of vertebrate mammals individual joins with individual to constitute the family. At an early stage in the evolution of human beings family integrates with family to form a larger whole, the tribe; later tribe joins with tribe to constitute a whole yet larger, the Nation-State.

Desire for security appears to have been the form in which the drive of life has chiefly expressed itself to effect these later integrations. Security was the motive which led to the alliance of king and people against the feudal nobility, as a result of which the Nation-State was established in Europe at the end of the Middle Ages. It is something of a historical accident that the tendency to larger integration inspired by this motive has not already proceeded to its logical conclusion in the construction of a world State. Rome nearly succeeded in paving the way for this further integration, and the beginnings of other attempts have subsequently been made. But always hitherto the factors which make for perpetuation at the existing level of the unit of integration actually reached have proved too strong for the drive of evolution in the direction of this further integration. For, whatever the unit which

at any particular level of the evolutionary process happens to have been attained, whether family, tribe, or Nation-State, it becomes the focus of a number of influential human sentiments. Patriotism and enthusiasm are evoked on its behalf, self-sacrifice in its service, pugnacity in its defence, jealousy for its honour. These sentiments combine to resist its absorption into a larger unit, and such absorption has been achieved in the past only at an appalling price in terms of human suffering. Nevertheless, it cannot, I think, be reasonably doubted that a further stage of integration lies before mankind, and that State must eventually combine with State to constitute the final unit of integration, which is World-State. This step will have to be taken sooner or later by our civilization if it is to survive, and it involves the surrender of the claims to sovereignty and absoluteness by the Nation-State.

If I am right in supposing that the State is in no sense either a unique or a final form of human association, there would seem to be no adequate basis for the view of it announced by the Absolutist theory and acted upon by modern dictatorial governments.

### *The State and other States*

The assertion that "the State has no determinate function in a larger community" is not true in fact. Not only is there common action by many States for the control of disease, of prostitution, and of conditions of labour and for the establishment of postal, telegraphic, railway, and air communications; but the concept of the League of Nations entails the recognition of the principle that the State is an element in a political complex which is or may become world-wide, and that as such it owns moral relations with other

members of the complex. The fact that this principle is frequently flouted in practice by constituent members of the League no more disproves its validity than the fact that men frequently act immorally in practice disproves the validity of the moral imperative.

### *Analogy with the Human Body*

The quotation "It is hard to see how the State can commit theft or murder in the sense in which these are moral offences" also implies the assumed uniqueness and absoluteness of the State. But if the State is merely one association among many, a transitory stage in an evolutionary process which will ultimately transcend it, there is no more reason for supposing that it cannot behave amorally towards its members than there is for extending a similar charter of release from moral obligations to a Church, a trade union, or a cricket club. The contrary view is based in part upon a false analogy between the body politic and the human body which is continually invoked by modern dictatorial governments as an excuse for the rights they claim over the lives of their subjects.

The human body not only represents but transcends each one of its members in such a way that it cannot as a whole be conceived of as doing violence to its parts. The body cannot, for example, suppress the rights of its heart or its lungs. It is, indeed, doubtful whether they have rights apart from the body to which they belong. The doctrine of the General Will has been interpreted to imply that there is a similar relation between the State and its members. It is on the basis of this assumed relation that freedom is represented as something which man obtains only in and through the State. This freedom, we are told, is alone real and concrete, and as such

is opposed to the abstract and unreal freedom which is enjoyed by the isolated individual.<sup>1</sup> The assumed identification between liberty and law, real liberty only being attained in and through obedience to the law, and the view that the individual receives an enhancement of being from the State,<sup>2</sup> are also consequences of this line of thought.

### *The Analogy False*

But (1) the analogy does not hold. If the general principles laid down in Chapter IV are sound, and if the State is, indeed, made for the individual, not the individual for the State, the individual may properly be regarded as an end in himself entitled to pursue the good life in his own way, while the State is to be regarded as a contrivance for making the good life possible for its citizens. The individual, therefore, has a right to pursue ends of his own which may be independent of the ends of the State. Now, there is no sense in saying that the heart or lungs are themselves ends, can pursue ends which are independent of the body, or possess rights which are independent of the body.

(2) I have had occasion in earlier discussions to make use of the phrase "Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches." The shoe of bad and oppressive laws may pinch individuals, but under a tyrannical govern-

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Hegel's statement that "nothing short of the State is the actualization of freedom," his description of the State as "a self-conscious ethical substance and a self-knowing and self-actualizing individual," and his assurance that "it carries back the individual, whose tendency it is to become a centre of his own, into the life of the universal substance."

<sup>2</sup> "The individual in the Fascist State is not annulled, but rather multiplied," and this in spite, apparently, of the fact that he "is deprived of all useless and possible harmful freedom, but retains what is essential" (*The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism*, by Benito Mussolini).

ment they have no means of making their discomfiture felt. But it is impossible for a part of the body to be ill treated by the whole without incommoding the whole. Briefly, in the human body it is not possible that there should be no representation of the parts; in the body politic there may be. (3) Let us, however, suppose that the analogy between the body politic and the human body is valid and justifies all the conclusions which its sponsors draw from it; there seems, then, to be no reason why the application of these conclusions should be confined to the State. If the State expresses and transcends my real will, and by virtue of so expressing and transcending it derives rights over my individual and rebellious will, so does my trade union, my Church, my club, or any other organization to which I may happen to belong. Hence there may arise a conflict of loyalties in which there is no reason in principle why my allegiance must of necessity go to the State.

### *Growth of Voluntary Associations*

The great growth of voluntary associations formed for specific purposes during the last hundred and fifty years is in a peculiar degree prejudicial to the claims made by the Absolutist Theory of the State. These associations fall mainly into two classes. There are associations of human beings for economic purposes and associations of human beings for ethical purposes. Between them these two classes of associations cater for the needs of men's pockets and their souls, thus canalizing the major human interests, other than political interests, which are apt to find collective expression. To these associations a man for the most part voluntarily opts to belong, whereas the State is the only association of which he is a member involuntarily



through the territorial accident of birth. Moreover, they cut right across the bounds of the Nation-State and frequently comprise citizens of many different States. It is not, then, clear on what principle the State arrogates to itself the right of interfering with an individual's free choice of the voluntary associations to which he elects to belong, or on what ground it presumes to override the obligations which he may have contracted towards them.

I conclude, then, that the pretensions which are increasingly put forward by the modern State to interfere with the free comings and goings, thinkings, writings, and speakings of its citizens, presuppose a false theory of the nature of the State. This theory derives support from the traditional habit of speaking of *the* State as if *the* State were a self-sufficient entity existing in isolation, thereby enabling writers and statesmen to neglect both the relations which the State may have to other States and the obligations which its citizens may have to voluntary associations formed for special purposes. The theory further involves a false analogy between the State and the human body, and it assumes, contrary to the obvious indications afforded by the evolutionary process, that the State is an ultimate and final form of human association. It also implies (1) that the State is morally good, and (2) that the State ought to be supported by its citizens whether it is good or not. Yet it is difficult to see what abstract reason can be adduced for serving one State rather than another.

## III. THE REVOLT AGAINST CIVILIZATION

*Diagnosis of the Nazi Movement*

There is, I think, a further consequence of the lopsided development to which I have drawn attention, a consequence which it is not easy to describe and whose importance, even if they concede its existence, many will be inclined to doubt. In a speech delivered in the autumn of 1933 on the subject of the burning of the books in Germany, Mr. H. G. Wells coined a memorable phrase in description of the Fascist movements then sweeping over the Continent. They symbolize, he said, "the revolt of the clumsy lout against civilization." What is the significance of the phrase? Let us suppose that every allowance is made for the effects upon Germany of the loss of the war; of her betrayal, in spite of President Wilson's promises, by the peace; of the humiliating provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and in particular of the grossly unfair war-guilt clause; of the loss of her colonies and of parts of the Fatherland itself; of the wedge of alien territory driven through her Eastern provinces by the Polish Corridor; of the humiliations to which her representatives were continuously subjected at Geneva; of her reluctant admission into the League; of the failure of the Allies to fulfil their moral promise to disarm; of the starvation of her people by a blockade protracted without mercy and beyond reason long after the signing of the Armistice; of the grossly extortionate sums extracted from her by way of Reparations; of the occupation of the Rhineland by foreign troops for twelve years after the war was over; of the occupation of the Ruhr by the French in 1923; of the destruction of middle-class savings by the depreciation of the mark in 1924; of the

economic blizzard which descended with full force upon Germany in 1929—when we have made allowance for and discounted all these factors, and others which might have been mentioned, something still remains for explanation if we are to understand fully the significance of the Nazi revolution. This something Wells diagnosed as a revolt, conscious or unconscious, against civilization as such. The movement of progress, he suggested, has been going too fast for those, an increasing number, whose minds have been unable to keep step with it. Progress by its very nature involves a strain upon the human mind—the strain of continual adaptation to new conditions, of novel reactions to novel complexities. It demands not only a high and increasingly high level of development, but certain tolerations and restraints—the toleration of ideas, of habits, and of culture that one does not understand, the restraint of one's primitive desire to "hit out" at what one cannot tolerate.

When the process of change goes too fast it engenders, inevitably, protest and reaction: the protest of those who, resenting their felt inferiority in face of the achievements, the knowledge, the competence, and the reputation of the clever, the cultivated, and the learned, are unconsciously looking for a chance of "taking it out of" those who make them feel inferior; the reaction which is born of a desire to return to a simpler and more familiar form of society in which discipline and courage are the virtues of the ruled, leadership and confident dogmatism of the rulers. Thus a civilization in which the speed of progress has outstripped the capacity of the average man to keep up with it is always in danger of slipping back to an earlier level as a result of his unconscious protest against the strain which it imposes

upon him. "We do not understand all this progress: and we do not hold with what little of it we understand. Therefore we are going to stop it, if we can." So runs the unconscious argument,<sup>1</sup> which, whatever the guise of reputable political or sociological dogma, in which it happens to clothe itself—the maintenance of old traditions, the return to a simpler mode of life, the preservation of racial purity, the "clean-up" of moral licence or political corruption, or shortly, simply, and mysteriously "the salvation of society"—underlies the reactionary movements of the contemporary world.

*Nazi Germany, a Signpost?*

It is, indeed, difficult to contemplate the phenomena presented by Nazi Germany without subscribing at least in part to the Wellsian diagnosis. There is, for example, the revolution in the position of women—a revolution which substitutes for the equal and companion of man the ideal of the pseudo-Gothic Madonna. The woman's function is to be a servant, the servant of both State and man; her pleasure to be the recreation of the tired warrior; her sphere, the Church, the kitchen, and the nursery; her duty, to breed, and again to breed in the interests of the "divine idea of race." If motherhood is "the natural duty of honour of women," "*wehrpflicht*" (the obligation to carry arms) is the "natural privilege of man." The Nazi glorification of war is familiar enough, and the work of the notorious Professor Banse<sup>2</sup> has opened the eyes of the English-speaking

<sup>1</sup> That the argument is not always unconscious the loudly cheered remark of a Nazi speaker at a public meeting, "Whenever I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my Browning," affords interesting testimony.

<sup>2</sup> *Germany, Prepare for War*, by Ewald Banse (Lovat Dickson).

world to the revolution in German mentality. War, we are told, is not only inevitable : it is good that it should be inevitable. To prepare himself for it is a man's highest duty ; to shed his blood in glad libation upon the altar of the national God should be his ideal. " Battle," chants the Professor, " is the everlasting yea, the fulfilment and justification of his existence." And that Professor Banse is no voice crying in the wilderness, but the spokesman of an official creed, the following quotation from Signor Mussolini's article in the *Italian Encyclopædia* entitled " The Political and Social Doctrine of Fascism " bears witness :—" Above all Fascism believes . . . neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. . . . War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have the courage to make it." Besides, was not a Society, the " German Society for Military Policy and Military Sciences," formed by the Nazi Government in July 1933 for the avowed purpose of helping to realize " the essential ideas of Professor Banse," and was not the Professor appointed, after his alleged repudiation by the German Government, to edit the first of an official series of text-books on education for German youth ? <sup>1</sup>

The object of education is announced to be not the opening of the mind, but the training of the body ; not the development of the power of thinking, but the inculcation of certain political and racial ideas : " The chief aim of education is physical fitness and preparation for National Defence . . . by means of obedience and absolute subjection to the will of the Leader which must

<sup>1</sup> As this book goes to press comes the news that Professor Banse has been dismissed from his Professorship at the University of Brunswick.

be expressed by the teacher. . . . Only after that the acquisition of knowledge."<sup>1</sup> Hitler's ideal is being faithfully realized :—" The task of the Teachers' Union is to develop the school in the patriotic and National Socialist idea. . . . There must be training to blind obedience to the teacher."<sup>2</sup> *A Nazi School History Text-book*, with a Foreword by Professor Ernest Barker, published in the spring of 1934 by the "Friends of Europe," affords an illuminating example of the propaganda by means of which, in the name of education, the Nazi State forms the minds of its young citizens.

### *Further Nazi Phenomena*

The free activity of the mind is viewed with distrust. Thus the headquarters of German rationalism have been closed, the movement suppressed, the leaders beaten and imprisoned. World-famous books are burnt and the ideals of internationalism and peace, of world brotherhood and the betterment of men, the ideals of Herder and Kant, are proscribed. Intolerance is extolled as a duty (" I am ordering you now to be intolerant with everything else. In future there must be in Thuringia one political faith only. . . . The Nazis claim the right to be intolerant in view of the necessity for uniform thinking and acting in the nation as a whole "<sup>3</sup>), and the State, as we have seen, is presented as a super-personality to whose ends the individual may be cheerfully subordinated. In Germany " Faith in the nation " is elevated into a new religion which takes the

<sup>1</sup> Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

<sup>2</sup> Decree of Bavarian Teachers' Union.

<sup>3</sup> Extract from a speech entitled " The Totality of National Socialism " delivered at the Nazi District Conference by the Reich Statthalter of Thuringia (*Frankfurter Zeitung*, June 20, 1933).

place of Christianity, now denounced as "unhealthy and unnatural."<sup>1</sup> It follows that what the State does is of necessity right—"It is the revolution: it is necessary, therefore it is good"<sup>2</sup>; while, as in ancient Rome, quasi-divine attributes are bestowed upon its leader: "Hitler is lonely, so is God; Hitler is like God."<sup>3</sup> In the light of these quotations it is not matter for surprise that the Nazis should be reported to have erected in the market square of Wernigerode a pillory five feet high in which they propose to place those citizens found guilty of having spread "lies about the Chancellor or other members of the Government, or about Nazi policy."<sup>4</sup>

Space precludes the citation of further illustrations; but enough has been said to give at least some countenance to the suggestion, widely made by competent observers, that the Fascist and Nazi movements cannot be adequately interpreted solely as the products of economic depression and political humiliation; that they have deeper roots in what is in effect a revolt against civilization; that they constitute a protest against intelligence as such. "We have had enough of intellectualism; let us get back to 'life.'<sup>5</sup> We are tired of trying to think for ourselves; let us pin our faith to

<sup>1</sup> "The German has his own religion, which springs living from his own special observation, sentiment, and thought. We call it the German or German-racial religion, and by that we mean the peculiar and natural German faith in the nation. . . . The German of to-day needs a healthy and natural religion which makes him brave, pious, and strong in the fight for folk, and Fatherland. . . . Christianity is not such a creed; on the contrary, it is rather the type of an unhealthy and unnatural final religion." (Extract from Catechism issued March 1934 by the German Nazi Church.)

<sup>2</sup> Almost any Nazi in conversation, as reported by W. Arnold Forster. (*Peace*, September 1933.)

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Franck (quoted by John Gunther in *The New Republic*).

<sup>4</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, June 21st, 1933.

<sup>5</sup> "Life" apparently in this connection means "instinct."

dogmas which, by giving us truth, will remove the necessity for thought. We do not feel equal to the task of having to make up our minds on the problems of morals and politics on their merits; let us, then, have a leader to make them up for us." So, it would seem, runs the unconscious creed of the new movements.

### *A New Cultural Orientation*

It is by no means clear that the revolt against reason is a phenomenon confined to Germany, although no doubt Germany affords at the moment its most striking manifestation. In Italy, in Austria, in Hungary, in Spain, in France, the same tendencies are reported to have been observed. Even in our own country signs are not wanting pointing in a similar direction. The post-war generation, as I remarked in the first Chapter, has passed, and its successor, the post-post-war generation, is in conscious reaction from its predecessor. Illustrations have already been cited <sup>1</sup> of the new mood of contemporary youth in England. It is a serious mood, but it is also a simple mood. Nor will the acute observer fail to discover in some of its characteristics as enumerated in Chapter I a family likeness to the more developed phenomena of contemporary Germany.

What is the relevance of the above to my main theme? Let us suppose, first, that I am right in diagnosing a secular change in the orientation of men's minds—a change which, expressing itself overtly in Fascism on the Continent, is also at work in the milder political climate of our own country. My supposition is that Fascism is not entirely a local movement born of special local circumstances, nor primarily an economic movement which is the fruit of economic hardship; it may

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I, pp. 25-27.



be in part a racial ferment, the result of a secular stirring in the minds of men. The mood of civilization, then, on this assumption, is changing. Its values are in process of transformation, and Fascism may well constitute the first indication, crude and imperfect as first beginnings often are, of the new valuations of the future.

### *Defence of Liberty Must be Positive*

Must liberty be excluded from the goods which the future will value? Not necessarily, if the warning of the Continent is heeded in time. But recent events on the Continent are assuredly a warning, in the sense that, if the general thesis outlined above is even in part correct, the movement which has stirred men's minds to intolerance and violence in Europe may be expected to have its repercussions here. If the valuations of civilized men are everywhere changing, we cannot expect the valuations of Englishmen to be wholly exempt from the change. Unless we can succeed, as in England we have done so often, in directing the flow of change into distinctively English channels, the new stirring in the minds of men is likely to prove as destructive of liberty here as it has been on the Continent.

What is the moral? That it is not enough negatively to defend liberty on the old basis. We must make our defence of liberty part of a positive creed, or, rather, we must recognize that it is only by using it to advocate a positive creed that liberty can be defended. Similarly with democracy. It is not true that democracy has been tried and found wanting. What is true is that democracy has been found to be difficult and not tried. The network of circumstance described in Chapter II, the deepening economic crisis, the growing complexity

of the problems which it must face, bear ever more hardly upon the modern democratic State. It cannot under these accumulated pressures afford to stand still. The forces of Fascism and of Communism are gathering for its overthrow, and with it the principle of liberty upon which it is based. Their most potent ally is the new mood of the young which I have endeavoured to diagnose—a mood which demands leadership, accepts guidance, and submits to authority. Unless the supporters of liberty and democracy can come to terms with this mood—unless, that is to say, they can use the liberty which remains to them to offer a constructive policy to satisfy the aspirations of the generation now coming to maturity, they will succumb to the forces which have destroyed democracy on the Continent. It is no part of my purpose to indicate in detail what that policy should be. I content myself with specifying three indispensable features which it must embody.

#### IV. PRE-REQUISITES OF LIBERTY'S CONTINUANCE

##### A. ECONOMIC SECURITY

##### *Political Liberty and Economic Security*

First, democracy must contrive to meet the case summarized in Chapter III, that political liberty is valueless without economic liberty. This case can in the last resort be met only if those who are economically insecure can contrive to make use of their political liberty to increase the measure of their economic security.

Contemporary liberals, I suggested in the first Chapter, fall into three classes. Of these only the third and smallest believes that political liberty must, if it is to survive, be positively used to end economic insecurity. I would

now suggest to the second class, the class of liberals who believe that to preserve the status established for liberty in the past constitutes a sufficient defence of it in the present, that it is precisely because liberty is to-day threatened by economic circumstance that its defenders must war with economic circumstance; that the defence of political liberty lies, in short, through the attack upon economic insecurity.

Let me recapitulate the conclusions of previous arguments in order to draw together the threads of the present one. Men live together in society, I postulated in Chapter IV, in order to secure certain ends—the development of personality, the right to conceive the good life after their hearts' desire and the right to pursue it as they conceive it. Liberty, I pointed out, was an essential pre-requisite of the realization of these ends. But security is a pre-requisite no less, and security includes economic security. Economic security, always of paramount importance to the working-class, has in the modern world taken on a new value for the middle-class. There is, indeed, in England to-day a new psychology in regard to security. In the piping times of the nineteenth century people desired not security but wealth, in the acquisition of which they were prepared to take risks. Then was the buccaneering stage of industry, when men sought to get rich quick and the psychology of *Log Cabin to White House* inspired the efforts of the office boy no less than those of the manager.

To-day, so far at least as this country is concerned, the position once so fluid has crystallized. The days of Dick Whittington are over and the desire for rapidly acquired wealth has given way to the desire for security. A safe job, a reasonable competence, short hours, and plenty of leisure are the ideal of the contemporary middle-

classes. There has never been a time when the Civil Service was so popular a career, or attracted so many of the best men at the Universities. Earlier in the present Chapter the reader's attention was directed to two kinds of associations: associations of individuals for ethical purposes and associations of individuals for economic purposes, which, cutting right across the bounds of the Nation-State, absorb most of the voluntary interests which are also public interests of contemporary men. What, I asked, should be the relation to the State of the individuals gathered together in these associations? So far as the sphere of ethics was concerned, the function of the State in relation to its members was, I suggested in Chapter IV, that of the maintainer of a background. It was not the business of the State to prescribe the good life for its citizens; it was its business to maintain that minimum of good behaviour on the part of all without which the good life could not be lived by any.<sup>1</sup> Coming now to the sphere of economics, I want to suggest that it must perform not only this *background function*, but a further and more positive function, if it is to provide men with the security which is its *raison d'être*. Both functions have a special relevance to the present situation in its bearing upon the prospects of liberty, and I will take them in turn.

### (1) *The State's Negative Function*

#### *The Control of the Blind Results of Economic Action*

The characteristic feature of economic action is its blindness. Economic action, as I noticed in Chapter II, although it proceeds from individual wills and aims at satisfying individual wants, nevertheless frequently pro-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 127-129.

duces results which are the contrary of what its authors will and the reverse of what everybody wants. It is, I pointed out, characteristic of economic action to produce effects upon people whose welfare lies outside the scope of the intentions of the authors of the action, and whose very existence may be unknown to them. These effects are frequently disastrous, as when, to take only one example, the invention of a new mechanism for manipulating the speed and direction of the flow of water may put bottle-washers out of employment all over the world.

Now, the State is the one association which is interested in all its citizens impartially, because they are its citizens. It is therefore its business to protect citizens as a whole from the blind effects of the economic actions undertaken by those of its citizens who either individually or in voluntary association are pursuing economic purposes. Unless it can do this it will be unable to give to its members security.

### *Demand for "Strong" Government*

The performance by the State of this function of maintaining a background of economic security was never more urgent than at the present time, when, as I pointed out in Chapter II, the economic machine moves at once so far and so fast that men seem unable to control its workings, or even to predict their results. Hence the apparent impotence of human will and effort in face of impersonal forces which bring communities to weal or to woe unaffected by the cerebations of statesmen. At present woe rather than weal is their most frequent outcome. All over the world unemployment, which is the direct though blind result of the actions undertaken

from economic motives of human beings organized for economic purposes, threatens man's economic security. Hence arises the demand for leadership and firm government, that the state may give men security by controlling the blind results of the workings of the economic machine—a demand which grows so insistent that men are prepared to sacrifice time-honoured political goods such as liberty and time-honoured political forms such as democracy in the hope of its satisfaction. Their hope is that a government of determined men animated by one united will, immune from criticism and unhampered by opposition, may check the blind results of economic *laissez-faire* and give them bread by restoring them to work. The fact that there is not the slightest evidence—with the sole exception of the special case of Russia—that the “strong” governments of the contemporary world are any more successful in this respect than the so-called “decadent” democracies<sup>1</sup> does not prevent the demand from being made, nor is it likely to prevent it so long as the governments in question can by virtue of their control of the Press successfully disguise from the people the extent of their failure to satisfy the demand, or divert their attention from the results of failure by inflaming nationalist passions.

### *Summary of Argument*

The conclusion is four-fold: (i) The function of the State in the economic as in the ethical sphere is what

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V, pp. 166–168, for the economic achievements of Mussolini's Government. I put the word “decadent” in inverted commas to show that I do not subscribe to the condemnation it implies. In America, as I have already pointed out, a democratic leader is making a courageous attempt to grapple with economic forces.

I have called a background function. In the sphere of conduct it must maintain a minimum of decent behaviour on the part of all in order to prevent the few from preying on the many. In the sphere of economics it must check the blind results upon the many of the economic actions which are voluntarily undertaken for gain by the few. (ii) The State is not, in fact, performing this function in the modern world, where, except perhaps in America, impersonal economic forces which the voluntary actions of human beings have set in operation are producing disastrous results upon other human beings. (iii) As a consequence, there arises a demand for strong government to control economic forces with the object of giving the many economic security. This type of government, when formed, exacts the sacrifice of liberty as the price of its leadership. (iv) The conclusion is that democratic governments, if they are to survive, must contrive to control with greater success than they have done in the past the effects of economic actions. They must, in other words, really perform their function of maintaining a general background of economic security.

## (2) *The State's Positive Function*

### *The Adjustment of Economic Inequality*

#### *Limitations of "Laissez-Faire"*

But there is a further and more positive function which the modern democratic State must perform in the economic sphere. It has often been pointed out that the gospel of *laissez-faire* preached by the great individualist thinkers of the last century, while working well enough in the sphere of morals and politics, broke down in that of economics. The presumption upon which it is based was that since every man was, where

his economic interests were concerned, purely selfish he could be trusted to look after those interests without interference from his neighbours. In a society in which there was equality of power, wealth, and opportunity this contention might be sound; it is obviously better, where possible, to leave men to look after their own concerns than for everybody to be meddling with everybody else's, with the State poking its inspectors into every household. Economically, however, the theory of *laissez-faire* rested on three fallacies :—

1. That each individual is equally far-sighted and has an equal power of knowing what he wants.
2. That each individual has an equal power of obtaining it and equal freedom of choice.
3. That what all the individuals want is identical with the well-being of the community as a whole.

The results of *laissez-faire* economics were the anomalies which convinced men that unrestricted freedom of private enterprise too often meant in practice a freedom to obtain the greatest possible amount of work for the smallest possible amount of wages, necessitated the Factory Acts, and finally generated a new trend of thought away from economic individualism and towards some form of State control. Of this the Fabians were the most effective expositors. From this point of view Bernard Shaw's so-called Fascist tendencies present no novelty. They derive from the contention, reaffirmed again and again in his Prefaces, that democratic forms are a fraud within the structure of a capitalist economic system, and that until the State controls the means of production and distribution liberty for the masses of men is a meaningless phrase.

This contention I examined at length in Chapter III,



but it can scarcely be said that it was in any sense disposed of. Nor am I concerned to answer it here, since it is not my business in this book to enter the field of Socialist controversy either as Socialist advocate or as Socialist opponent, or to obscure the clear-cut case for liberty by stirring the mud of familiar economic disputations.

### *The Paradox of Poverty in Potential Plenty*

It is, however, pertinent to point out that the circumstances of the time have given an entirely new point to the whole Socialist case by engendering the famous paradox of want in the midst of potential plenty. Man's life in the past has been hard and precarious because of the external forces arrayed against him. In the sweat of his brow he has wrung a meagre living from nature. His communities have been assailed by pestilence, famine, and disease. He has been at the mercy of powers which he could not control. To-day, for the first time in history, thanks to science, these adverse factors have been vanquished. Peace and plenty, comfort and a competence, are available for all mankind if mankind could only learn the wit to distribute the abundance which science can so easily produce.

It is precisely this abundance which holds up the existing economic system to ridicule. The conditions of poverty which millions of people were once prepared to accept as the natural order of things are completely intolerable in a world where wealth is daily destroyed because its distribution does not pay its owners. It is the consciousness of ill-clad men that cotton is being ploughed into the soil, of ill-warmed men that the coffee for the hot drinks which they crave has been used for fuel, of starving men that the wheat which might have

been used to make them bread has been allowed to rot and moulder, and that the farrowing sows whose offspring might have provided them with bacon have been killed : it is the spectacle of the world's quays and warehouses stacked with the rotting fish and fruit that might have fed, of the world's wharves piled with the coal that might have warmed them and theirs, that constitutes the greatest enemy to democratic governments throughout the world. That governments should be prepared to welcome as the saviour of the economic system the man who can make one blade of grass grow where two grew before is so repugnant to the conscience of mankind that sooner or later men will revolt against the system which permits this fatuity. This intolerable paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty is a standing incitement to violent action, and violent action in modern conditions leads almost inevitably to dictatorship whether from the Right or from the Left. Furthermore, it is worth noting that with the sole exception of Russia, where the circumstances were exceptional, political violence under modern conditions has always resulted in a dictatorship from the Right.

Unless, then, men can use the liberty which democracy gives them to resolve the paradox by discovering a means of distributing what science has enabled man to produce, the paradox will destroy democracy. It is in this sense that we must use political liberty to introduce a greater measure of economic equality, or economic inequality will destroy political liberty.

## PRE-REQUISITES OF LIBERTY'S CONTINUANCE

B. REFORM OF THE INSTRUMENT OF  
GOVERNMENT*Antiquated Procedure of Parliament*

Democracy is praised because democratic government is said to express the will of the people; but if it is to deserve this encomium it must contrive to secure that the will of the people does in fact find expression. The arguments summarized in Chapter III show that this is very far from always being the case. These arguments, it will be remembered, sought to throw discredit upon parliamentary institutions by demonstrating their inefficiency as instruments for carrying out the popular will because of their inability to transact public business with rapidity and decision. These arguments are not without substance. The procedure of the House of Commons stands, it is on all hands conceded, in urgent need of revision. At present it puts a premium upon obstruction and shamelessly wastes the time of members. Matters of trivial importance are debated beyond the limits of patience, with the result that urgent decisions on vital issues are taken without adequate discussion.

The procedure of Parliament derives from the past. Most of it was devised nearly three centuries ago. Adequate to the needs of a simple community, it is hopelessly unsuited to the affairs of a twentieth-century State. A nuisance at all times, this antiquated parliamentary procedure may on occasion become a positive danger—a danger because of the licence which it confers upon those who wish to oppose the popular will. The truth is that a Reform Bill is as necessary to-day as it was in 1832. The problem then was to enable the new

industrial class to free itself from the mediæval lumber which was retarding the growth of industry. The problem to-day is to prevent that class from taking advantage of an unreformed Parliamentary procedure to hold up the legislation necessary for the collective regulation of industry. The moral is that democracy and liberty are not to be preserved by the simple process of extolling the virtues of our ancient constitution, since that constitution is capable of becoming under modern conditions an obstacle to democracy and a danger to liberty. "The peril of dictatorship will remain unless the institutions of democracy can be made into effective instruments of government."<sup>1</sup>

*"Liberty and Democratic Leadership"*

I suggested in Chapter II that some part of the criticisms now levelled against parliamentary institutions would be met if Parliament were to cease to regard itself as primarily a law-making body and to revert to its traditional function of serving as "the grand inquest of the nation." How far this suggestion is, in fact, practicable I do not know, nor is it my business in this book to consider. The manifesto *Liberty and Democratic Leadership*, from which I have just quoted, goes farther, insists that "we must restore the electors' confidence in Parliament and enhance its value not only as the home of free discussion *but as a council of action for national reconstruction*,"<sup>2</sup> and proceeds to make recommendations for Cabinet direction by a nucleus of Ministers freed from departmental work, for the better Parliamentary employment of the private

<sup>1</sup> Extract from *Liberty and Democratic Leadership*, a manifesto published in February, 1934, over the signatures of 150 prominent men and women.

<sup>2</sup> My italics.

member, for the use of Orders in Council subject to necessary safeguards to speed up the business of government, and for the establishment of public corporations and other bodies specially created for the purpose to assume some of the administrative powers which now fall upon Parliament. These recommendations are admirable in intention, and are mentioned here as illustrations of what is meant by the contention that the instrument of government must be reformed. To discuss them in detail falls outside the scope of this book. I am content here to register the conclusion that, if Parliament cannot with reasonable promptness be transformed into an efficient organ of government capable of expressing the popular will, it will be superseded and will deserve that fate.

## PRE-REQUISITES OF LIBERTY'S CONTINUANCE

### C. EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

#### *Charges against Democracy Recalled*

I come, finally, to what I believe to be the touchstone for the future of democracy—the education of its citizens. A considerable part of the case against modern democracy derives, as we saw in Chapter III, from the alleged apathy and incompetence of its citizens. It is because they possess neither the interest nor the knowledge that an intelligent participation in public affairs requires that, it is said, the right of self-government may without injustice be taken away from those who are not fit to exercise it and political liberty filched from those who have no interest in protecting, because they have no capacity for enjoying, it.

Democracy—the fact is, alas, all too clear—does not inspire in its citizens a devotion to its ideals in the least

comparable with that of the young Communist or the young Fascist. It has not succeeded up to the present in creating any body of public opinion which actively is concerned to sustain the general good, and as a result it has not been able to prevent the State from becoming a prey to sectional interests which guide its policies to their own ends. Hence arise the peculiar defects of democracy—corruption in the administration of affairs, capriciousness in the formation of policies, nervelessness in their execution.

In general, the direction of democratic communities is charged with inconsistency, improvisation, and lack of resolution. Unwilling to offend any powerful section of their supporters, democratic governments are apt, it is said, to fit their policies to the wishes of the particular section which happens to be uppermost at the moment. Hence policies change with the changing influence of sectional interests. It is easy in the circumstances to contrast "the depressed and cynical aimlessness" of democracy with the firmness of purpose, the decision in leadership, of the dictator States. All these defects can, it is said, be traced more or less directly to the absence in the community of that alert and instructed interest in public affairs which the success of democratic government presupposes.

### *This High Task of Democracy*

These are serious charges, and by its ability to meet them democracy will stand or fall. Democracy as a theory of government was evolved in the ancient Greek City State, to which it was admirably adapted. In the Greek City State habits were simple, needs fixed, numbers small, and population homogeneous. We are trying to adapt it to modern societies with elaborate habits,

varied needs, and large and heterogeneous populations. To societies of this type the principles of democracy have in the past been only imperfectly applied. It may, indeed, with some show of truth be asserted that democracy has never yet been realized in the modern world. Nor can it be until citizens as a whole are educated to the responsibilities which it entails.

As with democracy, so with liberty. The Nazi State and the Communist States are at present seeking to produce citizens with minds that mirror their governments; a democracy should and does seek to produce citizens with minds of their own. Where they rely on propaganda democracy puts its trust in education. Now, those who have been brought up in the tradition of liberalism and rationalism which was formed and developed in the last century cannot but believe that the results of education will in the long run prove more effective than the results of propaganda—a belief which is the corollary of that related belief, to which I have already referred,<sup>1</sup> in the ultimate rationality of our species. Hence it is the bounden duty of those of us who care for liberty to insist that men should be educated to be rational; it is the bounden duty no less of those who care for democracy to insist that men should be educated for citizenship. It is only on condition that the citizens are so educated, educated in the practice of rationality, educated in the obligations of citizenship, that democracy can survive.

Of what nature should such education be? And is it to-day being given? An adequate answer to these questions falls outside the scope of this book. I have already referred briefly at the end of Chapter II<sup>2</sup> to the

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter IV, pp. 131-133.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter II, pp. 45-47 and 61, 62.

issues which they involve, and permit myself here to touch only upon two matters, both of which afford grounds for hope.

(1) *What Education for Citizenship Implies*

There is to-day a growing demand that education for citizenship should be given in our schools.<sup>1</sup> The essence of the demand is that young people should possess some knowledge of the world in which they live, of its problems, of their origin, and of its recent history. An education designed to meet this demand would include teaching in geography, civics (structure of government, local, national, and international), current history (in my time all the history books stopped at 1815; most of them still do, but none go beyond 1914), politics, and economics, and would be given not only to the secondary school boy or girl, but also to primary school children in their last year or years at school.<sup>2</sup> Not only is instruction in such subjects not given in our national schools; it forms little or no part of the education of the governing classes.<sup>3</sup> The bare bones of a list of subjects

<sup>1</sup> See the Pamphlet, *Education for Citizenship*, by E. M. Hubback, Principal of Morley College, and E. D. Simon.

<sup>2</sup> I am assuming, of course, a raising of the school-leaving age to fifteen. A democracy which took itself and its citizens seriously would not be content with a system of education which stopped before sixteen or even seventeen.

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Hubback and Sir Ernest Simon, in their pamphlet *Education for Citizenship*, reckon that "even in these exciting political days . . . only about twenty per cent. of Oxford undergraduates are getting any sort of political education, either in their University courses or through the means of student activities, and not more than five per cent. take any live interest in such matters." While the five per cent. estimate almost certainly falls considerably short of the truth, it is a fact that instruction in those subjects which are essential to an understanding of the modern world forms little or no part of an Oxford undergraduate's education. For example, no economics was taught in any School at Oxford until 1921;



are unilluminating, and can convey very little of my meaning. I give, then, a couple of examples of the sort of thing which education for citizenship would, to my mind, involve. I deliberately choose for my examples the type of instruction designed to inculcate scepticism in regard to governmental propaganda and to form and strengthen the capacity for critical judgment.

### *Instruction in Political Scepticism*

I have spoken earlier in this Chapter of the immense acquisition of strength which the influences responsible for the formation of opinion have derived from the scientific advances of the last half century. Science having given such formidable power to those who control the avenues by which men's minds can be reached, prudence demands that men's minds should be instructed in the arts by which sinister influences can be resisted. I would give, then, some instruction in the art of reading newspapers. The schoolmaster would select some incident which roused political passion in the past. He would first read to the children the account of the incident by the newspapers of one side and follow this by the account contained in the newspapers of the other. He would then read an impartial description of what really happened. He would show how, from a knowledge of the opinions and interests of the paper he was reading, a practised reader could infer to some extent what had taken place and draw the inevitable deduction that much of what is to be found in the papers

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even to-day economics constitutes only a third of the syllabus of one School, Modern Greats. Psychology does not appear in the official syllabus of any School. It is only recently that European history from 1879 to 1914 has been included in the History School, and English history still stops at 1885.

is in some degree untrue. By this means it would be possible to confer some measure of immunity against the influence of sinister interests that tamper with men's minds while professing to give them news.

Secondly, I would teach history not as the national history of a country, but as the universal history of the human race. This means, among other things, that history should be studied not from one but from a number of national angles. In the *Moniteur*, for example, of 1813 and 1814 Napoleon caused an uninterrupted series of victories to be announced. Pupils should be asked to imagine the surprise of the Parisians when they suddenly found under their walls the Allies who, according to the newspaper accounts, had been beaten by Napoleon in every battle. Students should be asked to count the number of occasions on which, in English newspapers, Lenin and Trotsky have been assassinated. They should be required to read in a school history approved by the government the account of the English wars with France in the eighteenth century and in the Middle Ages. They should then be asked to infer the accounts of the same wars which appear in a French history book. The object of these studies would be to inculcate a healthy scepticism with regard to the accounts which governments give of themselves in order to strengthen their position and to glorify the country which they govern. Such scepticism is the basis not only of independence of thought, but also of that temper of mind in the citizens as a whole upon which the liberty to think freely depends.

## (2) *The New Public for Reason*

In spite of the alleged apathy of the electorate there is to-day evidence of precisely that increase of serious

interest in public affairs, an interest which demands to be the better informed in order that it may the better understand, which, as I have suggested, is at once the condition and the safeguard of democracy.

(i) *The Adult Education Movement*.—One concrete and visible sign of this increase is the growth of the adult education movement. From the two pioneer classes which Mr. Tawney took in 1908 to the 40,000 students to-day enrolled in the various classes which are organized by the Workers' Educational Association is a long step. When it is remembered that the instruction given in these classes is non-vocational, that the movement does not train a man for wage-earning, that it equips him neither for social success nor for promotion in factory or office; when it is remembered too that it is to a large extent self-governing, the students determining their subject, choosing their tutors, and helping to draft his syllabus, and that the great bulk of the instruction given is in precisely those subjects—economics, politics, and the structure of government—cited above as constituting the qualifications for citizenship, the claim of Professor Peers<sup>1</sup> that the movement must be regarded as "an essential part of the equipment of democracy" will be endorsed by any impartial reader. It is, indeed, impossible to acquaint oneself with the past struggles and the present successes of this spontaneous movement for adult education without sharing Professor Peers's "renewal of faith in the future of enlightened democracy."

But the adult education movement is only a symptom of a new rationality and a wider demand. I have spoken above of the inventions whereby science has rendered

<sup>1</sup> See *Adult Education in Practice* (March 1934), edited by Robert Peers.

the minds of men more accessible to the influences that would mould them, as if they were factors antagonistic to liberty. Antagonistic I think they have been in the past, owing to the increased power which they have given to those who wish to control the popular mind in the interests of their own profit or power. Nevertheless, Shaw's contemptuous assertion in his Preface to *Too True to be Good*—"plutocrats had only to master the easy art of stampeding elections by their newspapers to do anything they liked in the name of the people"—is an exaggeration which the election of successive Labour Governments in the teeth of the warnings and denunciations of nineteen out of every twenty newspapers in the country sufficiently demonstrates.

Moreover, the effects of science in this matter are far from being wholly evil. In two respects, indeed, they have been definitely favourable to the growth of rationality, and consequently to the cause of liberty.

(ii) *The Scientific Habit of Mind*.—In the first place, as I have already noticed,<sup>1</sup> the habit of mind which science has engendered has brought a new respect for evidence. By giving men mastery over the forces of nature science has largely destroyed the superstition which was the fruit of man's subservience to nature. For faith and the will to believe it has substituted research and the wish to find out. During the last half-century men have shown a new readiness to consider questions on their merits, to weigh evidence, and to draw from the evidence conclusions which the facts and not their wishes suggest. Anyone who reads the accounts of the witch trials of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, culminating almost invariably in the con-

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter V, p. 147.

demnation of the witches on the strength of confessions extracted from them by torture, will at once become conscious by contrast of the new respect for evidence which the scientific habit of mind has engendered; for nobody, he will realize,<sup>1</sup> would dream of condemning people on the basis of such evidence to-day, simply because confessions so extracted do not constitute evidence at all. The decay of the belief in supernatural religion, and the consequent disinclination to accept statements for which no better evidence is given than the faith of those who make them, are further illustrations of the same tendency.

Nor can we doubt that, if the habits and ideals of scientific thought continue to form men's instinctive outlook upon the world, they will lead to a wider and more vigorous use of the instrument of reason to weigh evidence, not only in the expert, but also in the man in the street. It is in the increasing application of reason to social and political affairs that the hope of the future lies. Of the employment of reason in this sphere liberty is at once the condition and the outcome.

(iii) *The New Reasonableness of Man.*—In the second place, the power which an invention such as the wireless concentrates in the hands of those who control it is an evil only if it is unscrupulously used. It is not a foregone conclusion that it will be so used. Used for enlightened ends, the wireless may become the most powerful instrument for the education of citizens that has yet been devised. Already it has brought into existence a new thinking public, accustomed to hear both sides and anxious to obtain the materials for

<sup>1</sup> Not, unfortunately, if he is living in contemporary Germany, which in this respect, as in others, appears to have reverted to the modes of thought prevalent in the pre-scientific era.

impartial judgment on controversial issues in the form of arguments for and against addressed to their reasons. John Stuart Mill would have seen in some of the talks that have been delivered over the wireless the realization of his most cherished ideals. It is largely because of the new reasonable mood of the public which the wireless has helped to engender that enlightened ideas never had a better chance of acceptance than they have to-day. If you believe, as John Stuart Mill believed, and as all rationalists must believe, that man is at bottom reasonable and will respond to arguments addressed to his reason, then the fact that the wireless—to take the most conspicuous example of the new instruments of opinion—renders the minds of more people accessible to argument than has ever been the case in the past cannot but appear to you a gain.

It cannot but appear to you a gain that, as a result, there is to-day ground for the belief expressed in the Manifesto on *Liberty and Democratic Leadership*, from which I have already quoted, that "at this moment we have in Britain a public that is anxious beyond all precedent for calm, efficient, and active leadership," a public that "must not be threatened or played down to," but "must be informed, convinced, and led." Given, in the words of the Manifesto, "a conception of leadership that involves treating democracy with a new respect, offering scientific schemes of a far-sighted and far-reaching order, commending them by the methods of reason and asking that they should be judged on their merits alone," an unprecedented opportunity opens out before the present and the coming generations—an opportunity to mould and mobilize by hard thought, honest effort, and common action this new world of opinion which science has made accessible.

*The Temper of Advocacy*

The case for liberty is addressed to the reason rather than to the emotions, since it is only by an appeal to reason, as I have insisted throughout, that liberty can be defended. Hence anything that strengthens what Plato called the reasoning part of the soul should be welcomed by liberty's defenders. Only let them not make the mistake of meeting their opponents with their opponents' weapons. Passion begets passion, anger anger, panic panic, and in the sphere of passion, anger, and panic the enemies of enlightenment will always triumph. It is for this reason that liberty is eclipsed in times of crisis, especially in war, when men's passions are aroused and the emotions of fear and pride are the mainsprings of their actions. But just as passion and anger beget their like, so does reason. Enunciate a proposition in which you believe, argue its merits, state dispassionately the objections to which it is exposed, estimate the force of these objections and answer them when they can be answered, and the mood of the newly reasonable public which listens to the talks, discussions, and debates over the wireless with an eagerness born of the desire to find the truth for itself will respond to you. If I am right in my supposition that liberty can be preserved in the political sphere only if changes are made in the economic, the degree of men's reasonableness, of their new responsiveness, to reasoned argument, is likely to become crucial in the future. If there is to be change, change which involves a redistribution of power and wealth in the community—and it is in the midst of precisely such change that we are living to-day—the maintenance of the privileges and liberties of civic life will depend in the long run upon the political restraint of citizens, upon the

willingness of the supporters of the old order to yield to new concepts, upon the wisdom and restraint of the advocates of the new in stating their case.

In the great struggles of history which have involved the transference of power in the community the self-sacrifice and statesmanship required for peaceful adjustment have usually been lacking. In this respect our English record gives ground for hope. It has been remarked that the distinguishing feature of English history is the political genius of the English people. We invented the institution of Parliamentary Government. Of this institution, our greatest contribution as a people to civilization, we do well to be proud ; for liberals too have their patriotism and are not prepared without a struggle to abandon the political goods of their country, liberty, and Parliamentary Government merely because those untrained in our traditions are proving unable to live up to the challenge which free institutions impose upon peoples who would enjoy them. The transference of power from a feudal aristocracy to an urban middle class involved Europe in centuries of intermittent war. In England it was managed with one small war and a couple of bloodless revolutions. In 1832, in the height of the industrial crisis which followed the close of the Napoleonic War, we contrived without bloodshed, by the instruments of the Reform Bill, to transfer power from the landowning aristocracy to the industrial middle class. To-day, a hundred years later, in a situation not dissimilar created by a post-war crisis not less severe, we are faced by the necessity of effecting a further economic readjustment.

The economic changes demanded by Socialists involve a transference of power even more difficult than that which was effected in 1832. We are to-day wit-



nessing the fury of the struggle which the demand for these changes has provoked on the Continent. It may well be that the question whether any civilization is to survive at the end of that struggle depends on our ability in England to effect the same transition without the cruelty and bloodshed that it has involved in Russia, in Italy, in Germany, and in Austria.

One thing, I think, is certain. If the advocates of liberal ideas meet violence with violence, denunciation with denunciation, bitterness with bitterness, they will find that they have assisted in generating an atmosphere in which power is unconstitutionally seized by a forceful minority and liberty is consigned to the limbo of the outmoded shibboleths of an obsolete democracy. To meet the new forces of violence and hysteria with violence and hysteria is for the friends of liberty to betray their cause from the outset. Defend liberty coolly and with reasoned argument; show that the advantages which a free community enjoys far outweigh the disadvantages which attend its enjoyment, and your advocacy, I am convinced, has a good chance of winning an enlightened public opinion. It is in this belief that the preceding pages have been written; it is to this public opinion that they are addressed.

